



A FOOT IN
TWO
WORLDS



THE JOY AND STRUGGLE OF
THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

John Chapman



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Guidebooks for Life

Bible-based essentials
for your Christian journey

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For Peter and Betty Chiswell—
friends of long standing, and fine Christian leaders.

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Chapter 1

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT FOR WIMPS



I HAVE BEEN A CHRISTIAN for 60 years. That's a long time to give something a try, and it puts me in a position to strongly recommend it.

Over that time, two particular aspects of Christian living have surprised me. One is that it turned out to be so good; the other is that it turned out to be so hard.

I remember speaking to a group of men at Robb College at the University of New England, and I was explaining that God would forgive us for all our sins because of the death of the Lord Jesus. A young man said, "Are you saying that God will forget about my past?"

"That is exactly what I am saying", I replied.

The tears welled up in his eyes and he said, "That's nearly too good to be true".

"It seems like it, but it happens to be true."



I knew how he felt.

When I became a Christian, I didn't give a great deal of thought to the consequences of deciding to follow Christ as my Lord and Saviour. I was overwhelmed by Christ's love for me in dying in my place and taking the punishment my sins deserved. The idea that I could be forgiven for everything—that was nearly too good to be true.

As time went by, I began to realize that not only was continuous forgiveness possible but that I had received the Holy Spirit to live with me. As I read the Bible, he began to teach me to readjust my thinking and to bring it in line with the way God was thinking. Sometimes this was painful, but it was also good. He began to make me into a person with a character just like the Lord Jesus Christ. I was thankful about that. Jesus is such an impressive person! He is so clean, so right, so kind and loving, so honest. I found, as time went by, that I longed more and more to be like him.

In addition to these things, I had a clear promise from the Bible that God would guide me each step along the way. At the time of making decisions, I was often uncertain which way to go but, looking back, I can see that God was guiding me and caring for me. It is always clearer in retrospect. What a joy that is!

When I went to church as a young Christian it was great. So many new friends—brothers and sisters in Christ. I had become a member of the family of God. I know that some people have had bad experiences at



church. I am sorry about that, but that has not been my story. I have experienced love, kindness and care. I have always loved being with God's people because it gives me a chance to love them. When the Bible has been taught well, it has fed and exhorted me. I have enjoyed singing and praying with others, and drinking in the encouragement of simply being in the presence of forgiven people like me.

But probably the best thing of all about becoming a Christian was the promise that one day I would take my place in the everlasting new creation that Christ has prepared for his followers. I didn't realize this all at once. As time went by, it all seemed better than my best hope.

However, that is not the full picture. Right from the beginning, I also found living as a Christian much more difficult than I had imagined. It was one thing to say, "Lord Jesus, please take all of my life and use me in your service". It was entirely another thing to **do it**.

You see, up to the time of my conversion, I had thought and acted like the pagan I was. I thought the world existed for my pleasure. However, as a Christian man all that had to change. But change was slow and difficult. To my great disappointment, I had to learn the same lessons over and over again. The more I seemed to draw near to Christ, the more I recognized my need for change. This was sometimes painful.

Why, for example, was it so hard to read the Bible? I enjoyed it when I did it, but it took me so long to get



around to doing it. I would think of urgent matters to attend to—a letter to write, a phone call to make. Matters were made worse when someone told me I shouldn't read it unless I really wanted to, in case it led to 'legalism' (whatever that was). Under this 'guidance', I stopped altogether. One day I said to myself, "Chappo, just do it! It must be better to do it even if you don't feel much like it, than not to read it at all." So I did, and it made a great deal of difference.

This could be repeated with my prayer life, evangelism, and other forms of Christian obedience. For example, I was now to be a careful steward of my time and money. They were to be brought under the authority of Christ and not squandered on self-indulgence.

In addition, I discovered that I was at odds with many of my former peers. They were not trying to follow Christ, and they didn't want me to either.

In the area of morality, I had to learn that people's lives were sacred and important. They were as much in need of help as I had been. I had been totally self-centred in the past, and I used people. That behaviour had to change. I was to be Christ-centred and consequently other-person centred, as he was. That remains a hard lesson to learn.

Sinful habits from the past dogged my footsteps. Some days I felt overwhelmed. It seemed an endless grind.

From time to time, well-meaning Christians offered me a 'cure' for my situation. I tried method after method



in an endeavour to reach a higher, more successful plain of Christian living. These all turned out to be waterless springs. I was the same person.

The long and short of it is that I have reached the stage where I am happy to say that living the Christian life is both good—really good—but also hard. There is no way that I would ever opt out, but there is also no way that I am going to avoid the struggle. I have come to see that this is the normal way the Bible writers experienced the Christian life. And so it is for me.

This book is designed to help us see that this constant battle to live a life pleasing to God is not only normal but God's way of strengthening us and making us Christlike. Like a loving Father, God has his eye on us for good. His gracious purpose for us is that we live in the tension between longing for Christlikeness and being unable, this side of glory, to do that perfectly.

We are, in fact, people with a foot in two worlds. We have one foot firmly planted in this world and, at the same time, one foot planted in the world to come, where everything is perfect. This brings its own tension which cannot be totally relieved until Christ's return or when we go to be with him in death. However, this does not stop us from enjoying life with God now while we wait patiently for then.

What I aim to do in the following pages is describe how the Bible sees our present age, and also what the Bible says about the age to come. I will try and show how our simultaneous membership of both worlds



brings us tension, and how the Bible envisages us living with this tension. I will also describe some counterfeit methods I have observed to relieve the tension, so we will not be easily deceived. And finally, I will look at some promises in God's word that have helped me. I hope they help you as well.



Appendix

DISCUSSION GUIDE



THE QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW are designed to help you discuss the content of *A Foot in Two Worlds* with others—your spouse, your friends or the small group you meet with at church. Use these questions as a way of discussing the content of each chapter and encouraging each other to put God’s word into practice.

Chapters 1 and 2: Christianity is not for wimps/This present world

1. What do you think are the best things about being a Christian?
2. What do you think are the hardest things about being a Christian?



3. What does Genesis 1-3 tell us about our present world (and our lives):
 - about how good it is?
 - about why it is so messed up?
4. What are the consequences of the fall?
5. What was Satan's role in the fall of humanity into sin?
6. Read John 8:44, Hebrews 2:14-15 and Ephesians 2:1-3. What do these passages tell us about:
 - the devil and his work?
 - the world we live in?
 - the human heart?

Pray that God will protect you from the devil's lies. Thank God that Jesus has overcome the devil.

Chapter 3: The world to come

1. When you think about the world to come, what do you imagine it will be like?
2. Read Isaiah 11:3-9 and Revelation 21:1-5. What sort of place will the new creation be? How will it differ from this present age?
3. Read 1 John 3:1-3, Colossians 3:1-4 and Revelation 7:9-15. What sort of people will be in the world to come?
4. These wonderful pictures of our future in Christ should captivate and encourage our hearts. But we often neglect to think about them or focus on them. What do you think distracts or diverts us from keeping our eyes on the age to come?

Thank God for the future that awaits people who trust in Jesus. Ask him to help you fix your sights on that future.



Chapter 4: A foot in two worlds

1. In what sense do Christians already belong to the age to come?
2. Read 1 John 2:15-17. How are you most in danger of loving the world or “the things in the world”? What worldly attitudes do you detect in your heart?
3. Re-read the section on page 48 about the ‘forest of sin’. Is this how you tend to think about the sin that still dwells within you? Which parts of the ‘forest’ do you need to attack most urgently?
4. Read Hebrews 12:1-4 and Philippians 3:10-15. In the race that is the Christian life:
 - What is the prize or finish line?
 - What slows us down and hinders us as we run?
 - What should we do as we run?

Ask God to help you ‘run the race’ until the end. Pray that he would help you long for the next world rather than the things of this world.

Chapter 5: Relieving the tension

1. Summarize what is meant by ‘entire sanctification’. Then discuss:
 - What is right and desirable about the idea?
 - What is dangerous or unhelpful about the idea?
2. In this chapter, John Chapman writes: “Not all experiences are for all. God deals with us personally and individually for our own good. That which is available for all is told to us in the Bible. I sometimes wonder about our fascination with people’s experiences. I think we should perhaps take greater care when we are giving our testimonies. Our experiences are real, but we can be



easily mistaken about their meanings.” Talk about some spiritual experiences you have had, or have heard about from others. What would be the best way to understand those experiences from the Bible?

3. The teachings that God wants us to have perfect health now and prosperity now have been described as ‘godly heresies’. Why are they godly? And why are they also mistaken?
4. Re-read the ‘Three words of warning’ at the close of the chapter. Do any of these particularly challenge you? Why?

Ask God to keep you firm in faith, and for help understanding his promises for this world and the next.

Chapters 6 and 7: Living positively with the tension/ Keep your eyes on the goal

1. What do you think is the difference (if any) between ‘joy’ and ‘happiness’?
2. Read 1 Peter 1:3-9:
 - How would you summarize the experience of the people Peter is writing to?
 - How is this like/unlike your own experience as a Christian?
3. Read Romans 8:22-25. How does this passage describe our present experience in the world?
4. Read Romans 8:28-30. What comfort and reassurance does this passage give us?
5. Try to summarize in a few sentences what it means to live as a Christian with ‘a foot in two worlds’.

Thank God that he works in all situations for the good of those who love him. Ask him to help you live faithfully in this world with your eyes fixed on the world to come.





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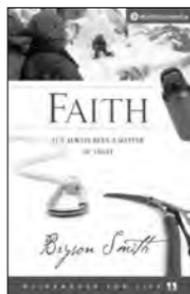
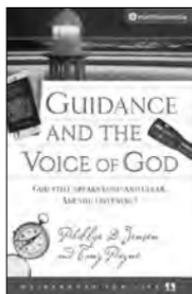
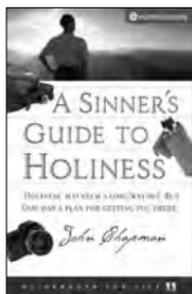
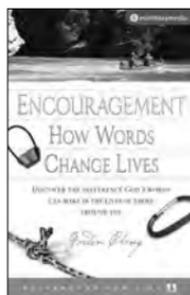
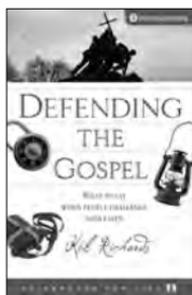
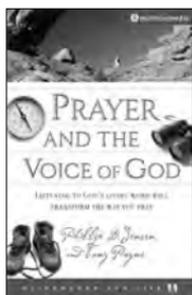
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We want this series of books to grow into a basic library for every Christian, covering all the important topics and issues of the Christian life in an accessible, straightforward way. Currently the series includes books on holiness, encouragement, prayer, guidance, defending the gospel, and faith.



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Bible-based essentials
for your Christian journey



The Christian life is good—really good. It's a life of forgiveness and freedom and fellowship and joy.

But the Christian life can also be genuinely hard. Sickness and suffering still come our way. Sinful habits from the past still dog our steps. Sometimes it feels like an endless grind.

Why is this? Is it meant to be this way? Is there any solution?

In this masterful little book, John Chapman answers these pressing questions by drawing on his profound knowledge of the Bible, and his 60 years experience living as a Christian.

About the author



JOHN CHAPMAN is a well-known evangelist, Bible teacher, and author of the best-selling *A Fresh Start* and *Know and Tell the Gospel*. For 25 years, he was the Director of the Anglican Department of Evangelism in Sydney. Now, in his 'retirement', he continues to teach at Bible colleges, speak at conventions around the world, and find time for the occasional game of tennis and golf.

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