



It's a Wonderful Life

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErrzjGCi3gY>

The last nine minutes of Jimmy Stewart's classic Christmas movie are available free at the above website. I have had a wonderful and satisfying life. It did not necessarily start that way...

I used to live crawling between a woman and a bottle. I straightened up when I turned two years old! As Italian-Americans my four brothers and I were raised Roman Catholics. My father trumped my mother's example of regularly attending mass by going only for Christmas and Easter. I saw my older brothers standing against the back wall of the church and wanted to leave the church with the same haste – Out 'a here! At fifteen I was calling myself an atheist, but still went once into my empty Catholic church building and said, "God, I have left this church, but I still have my doubts about this man Jesus Christ who walked on water, calmed the storm, and fed the 5,000. God, if you are real, please show Yourself to me."

At sixteen I was privileged to visit Southern California and immediately met two scientists from UCLA. I mocked them and threatened to tell the university when I realized that they believed in Adam, Eve, and Noah as people who really lived and walked on the earth. One asked if I had ever read the book that I was mocking. Gulp. I had read portions in Catholic Mass and in a high school literature class. Truly it lacked intellectual integrity to dismiss a book that I had never read. One of the two scientists paid my way to a Christian camp starting at Hume Lake near Fresno, California. Always agreeable to exploring my world, I attended with a friend. Hardened against religion, I took walks in the woods as the young people had their morning Bible studies together. As I played with them each afternoon, however, I saw an attractive joy and difference about them. I began asking questions about the Bible. By week's end I recognized that I had a *sin* problem with God rather than an intellectual one. I repented of (changed my mind about) sin and weeks later returned to New Jersey as a new believer in Christ.

There I looked for a certain house where my future wife, only a friend at the time, had once tricked me into attending a Christian concert. While I sat on the floor mocking the Jesus people at that house concert, I was startled when Sandy closed her eyes and lifted up her hands to God. Can a person feel that close to God? At seventeen I became a regular at "New Life Bible Fellowship" as we together studied the Bible chapter-by-chapter, verse by verse. Over the years the mountain of evidence for Christ has convinced me that my leap of faith was far shorter than if I had believed in evolution and some "Big Bang" in prehistoric times. Our universe was made by Him and for Him.

My conversion was so dramatic that I passionately wanted to share Christ with others; God was clearly working in my heart and attitudes. Second Chronicles 16:9a became my life verse from Scripture: "For the eyes of the Lord move to and

fro throughout the earth that he may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.” While my heart is still prone to wander, I yet hope to serve the Lord with “no reserve, no retreat, and no regrets.” In 1992 I was flying back with my family from six years of missionary service in Colombia, South America, and told my wife that even if my life ended then that I had lived a wonderful life. Our time serving the children of missionaries who worked with Indians in Colombia’s jungles was just that gratifying. Afterwards our family was able to spend eight years starting three new churches in the Dominican Republic. Since 1997 I have also legally made about 40 teaching trips to Cuba to develop leaders and train teachers. This has all been off the charts as God has used us in children’s hospitals, a deaf institute, chapel for professional baseball players, and both public and Christian schools in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

It is a wonderful life if you live it with God. While I strive to make Christ known in new places, I remain burdened for friends and family who continue climbing the ladder of success only to discover that it was always leaning against the wrong wall. Please take time to read the Gospel of John in the New Testament and consider this man Jesus Christ. You may ignore your own death; you cannot ignore His. He rose again and invites us to know Him.

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“And the witness is this, that god has given us eternal life, and this life is in his son. He who has the son has the life; he who does not have the son of god does not have the life.” – 1 John 5 : 11 , 12 , New Testament

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters; and you
Who have no money, come, buy
And Eat. Come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without
Cost. Why do you spend your
Money for what is not bread;
And your wages for what does
Not satisfy? Listen carefully to
Me, and eat what is good, and
Delight yourself in abundance.”
Isaiah 55 : 1, 2 , Old Testament

“And the spirit and the bride say
'Come.' And let the one who hears
Say, 'come.' And let the one who is
Thirsty come; let the one who
Wishes take the water of life
Without cost.”
Revelation 22 : 17, New Testament

