

THEME 2002
CONTINENTALS & YOUNG CONTINENTALS:

LIVE IT UP
by **Leen La Rivière**

This means according to Webster something like: to fulfil the hopes, terms or character of a person or situation. So to do this it will create a good time and a true experience. And by doing so, it will create praises and in our situation the end results of our ACTIONS will be PRAISES TO GOD: United we praise.
Would it not be a true blessing, if viewers, public, people who know us will start praising God, when they have seen you and your lifestyle?

Quite funny, when the average listener will hear "Live... live it up" they may interpret the phrase as a challenge for over-indulgence: 'Eat, drink, be happy and do not bother...'. But this will never give a true relationship. A true relationship will only evolve if we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, so our lives will be pleasing to God. See just before Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan: "do these things and you shall live..."

How does this work?

In *Luke 10* we find the story of the Good Samaritan. This famous story that Jesus told, is an answer to a question about the laws of Moses.

"On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test (temptation) Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'What is written in the Law?' He (= Jesus) replied. 'How do you read it?' He (the expert) answered: 'Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' 'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.' But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' 'Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell in the hands of robbers?' The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him'. Jesus told him: 'Go and do likewise(= do these things and you shall live)'."

So who fulfilled the hope of the poor traveller?

- It was not the *priest*, with this part of the story Jesus shows a remarkable critique on spiritual leaders. It seems they were too much occupied with their agenda, their performance, to stay ritually clean. No time or possibility to show true compassion and 'get into the dirt of the real world'
- It was not the *Levite*, with this part of the story Jesus shows strong critique on the religious artists (the singers) of his time. This person did not show compassion and Jesus condemns that attitude. True compassion, the right acts are more important as singing and professionalism.
- It was the *enemy* who did the right thing; so it is a story with strong social and political critique. We are called to step over any border of social and political separation. (The Samaritans were seen of lowest rank, a good Jew would never mix with them or meet them; Samaritans had the wrong interpretation of faith.)
- And Jesus' summary is: Do like this Samaritan, go and live it up.

Interesting dilemma

How is this 'Love God with all you are and above all' related to 'Love your neighbour as yourself'?

Quite easily we get in our lives more and more focussed on 'loving God', so we do bible studies, prayertimes, we participate in praise & worship meetings, and we are truly involved in expressing our love to God.

At the same time, it seems sometimes, that we have less and less an open view for the world around us. Sometimes less and less time goes to care for the needy, to give practical help. Quite easy we make the same mistakes as the priest and the Levite in the story of Jesus.

So can we keep the balance? Because it should be:

- praising God (by our lips and by our lifestyle)
- loving God, this is as well shown in our obedience (Jesus said: 'If you love me, keep my commandments'), so:
- show our love for others, that is do/show in your actions/real life what that means.

So a challenge to have our praise and worship based on relationship, fellowship with each other. This right social context gives the depth, truth, integrity so needed.

Warning

Jesus gives in Mathew a few warnings against just 'religious performance' (Mathew 7:21-23):

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.'"

Quite many believers focus on those mentioned spiritual experiences. Do not expect anything from those experiences and performances. They exist, those may happen, but that is NOT the point to focus on.

In Mathew 25:34-45 Jesus explains some more about what the will of God is:

"Then the King will say to those on his right 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me'. 'Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' And the King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'." (The others in this story who did not participate in these practical actions, will not enter the Kingdom of God.)

So the picture gets clear. It is: AND doing compassion AND praising God.

This is totally according to the voices of the prophets of the *Old Testament*. A number of times they warn, that God is getting sick of our praise & worship and our religious activities. Why? Because justice is not done, people do not care, no social concern, no practical actions to help people with various needs (see e.g. Amos 5:21-24; Isa. 1:11-17).

And lets never forget one of the golden advices of the *New Testament*: *'Whatever you do, do it with all your heart as unto God and not men.'* (Colos. 3:23)

So our call this year is: **PRAISING GOD AND LIVE IT UP, so GO and DO**

(Based on contributions from Cam Floria, Wally Nason II.)

N.B.

- A good study on Worship can be found in the book 'WORSHIP', written by Graham Kendrick (published by Kingsway).
- A balanced view on the relation between justice and worship can be found in the book: 'In Spirit and in Truth', editor Robin Sheldon; go to the section: 'Justice, Rock and the Renewal of Worship' by Graham Cray (published by Hodder & Stoughton).