

The Destiny Series Volume I

FOR SUCH A
TIME AS THIS

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Lessons in Discernment
for the Thinking Christian

Dr. Ron Woodworth
+ an anthology +

REDEMPTION  PRESS

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DEDICATION



To Didi Duncan (September 7, 1949–May 10, 2006). None I've known were more lovingly committed to Christ, faithful to their pastor, generous in their support of the poor and needy, and passionate about sharing the Good News of Jesus' forgiveness with others. Didi, you will be dearly missed but never forgotten...we are eager to see you again in the presence of our Lord (1 Thess. 4:13–18).



To Genevieve Danielle (literally, “courteous spirit who trusts in God”), our first grandchild (born July 17, 2006), this work is also affectionately dedicated. May you be blessed with knowledge of the loving kindness of Christ at an early age and always (Tit. 3:4–7).

And finally, I also dedicate this book to you my readers, fellow travelers on this way of life in Christ Jesus!

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PROLOGUE

The ancient Greeks had three sister-gods of Fate, who controlled human birth, one's life span, and death.¹ From fate we derive the English words such as *fatality* and *fatalism*. The idea behind these words has to do with death and destruction, which human beings are powerless to change. As a result, fatalism is partner to pessimism—the doctrine that reality is essentially evil. In essence, the Greeks were left with an existence of gloom and despair:

All hope of happiness and goodness are without basis.
Expect the worst because that is what you are going to get,
Because the gods are against us all!

It was into this world of human anguish that the apostles preached that, in Jesus Christ, God was extending his grace, goodness, and glory to those who would lovingly believe:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him...For those God foreknew he also predestined to be changed into the likeness of his [beloved] Son...And those God predestined, he also called...justified...and glorified. What, then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

(Rom. 8:28–31)

Imagine a good God, rather than an evil one, a God who was for people instead of against them, and a God who positively predestined people rather than negatively doomed them. This is what I mean when I use the term “destiny” in *The Destiny Series*. This book (and other volumes to follow) is about a God who can change your life for the better, a God who has a kind intention toward you in Christ, and a God who has the power to transform

the core of your being into conformity with that of his beloved Son, Jesus. You can change, you can be fulfilled, you have a purpose and a destiny!

The title, *For Such a Time as This*, is taken from the text in the Book of Esther where Mordecai, Queen Esther's uncle, challenges her to take a stand in the presence of the king (though uninvited), in order to avert genocide of the Jews. Anticipating that this request would undoubtedly cause fear in Esther, Mordecai speaks courage to her heart with his passionate plea:

Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come into the Kingdom (a royal position) *for such a time as this?*

(Esther 4:13–14)

My appeal is to all those who have been similarly called, placed, and promoted by God in this generation. Let us not shrink back because of the fear of man, but allow God to use us to wisely and yet courageously communicate his message of life to people of every strata of society. For who knows, maybe you also have been given your place and position of influence...“for such a time as this.”

The title extension: *Lessons in Discernment for the Thinking Christian*, is an invitation to contemplative thoughtfulness with a view to developing a capacity to perceive what is not readily evident to the natural mind. In other words, the goal of the writing and reading of this book is to stimulate us to gain spiritual insight as we learn to *see* beyond mere words and into the mind and heart of God.

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

(1 Cor. 2:9)

Finally, this is an *anthology*, or a collection of selected literary articles. Rather than a book about one topic, the objective here is to sample a broad cross-section of writings on a variety of subjects. All of this is designed to help the reader in constructing a Christian worldview that is translatable into the daily life of one who is committed to spiritual growth and fruitfulness, as a fully devoted follower-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:16). Author's invitation: We value your readership and encourage you to please write us with any comments, questions, or critiques at Dr.Ron@RonWoodworth.org.

WISDOM'S INVITATION

(Proverbs 8)

- 1 Does not wisdom call out?
Does not understanding raise her voice?
- 2 On the heights along the way,
where the paths meet, she takes her stand;
- 3 beside the gates leading into the city,
at the entrances, she cries aloud:
- 4 “To you, O men, I call out;
I raise my voice to all mankind.
- 5 You who are simple, gain prudence;
you who are foolish, gain understanding.
- 6 Listen, for I have worthy things to say;
I open my lips to speak what is right.
- 7 My mouth speaks what is true,
for my lips detest wickedness.
- 8 All the words of my mouth are just;
none of them is crooked or perverse.
- 9 To the discerning all of them are right;
they are faultless to those who have knowledge.
- 10 Choose my instruction instead of silver,
knowledge rather than choice gold,
- 11 for wisdom is more precious than rubies,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.
- 12 “I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence;
I possess knowledge and discretion.
- 13 To fear the LORD is to hate evil;
I hate pride and arrogance,
evil behavior and perverse speech.

- 14 Counsel and sound judgment are mine;
I have understanding and power.
- 15 By me kings reign
and rulers make laws that are just;
- 16 by me princes govern,
and all nobles who rule on earth.
- 17 I love those who love me,
and those who seek me find me.
- 18 With me are riches and honor,
enduring wealth and prosperity.
- 19 My fruit is better than fine gold;
what I yield surpasses choice silver.
- 20 I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,
- 21 bestowing wealth on those who love me
and making their treasuries full.
- 22 “The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works,
before his deeds of old;
- 23 I was appointed from eternity,
from the beginning, before the world began.
- 24 When there were no oceans, I was given birth,
when there were no springs abounding with water;
- 25 before the mountains were settled in place,
before the hills, I was given birth,
- 26 before he made the earth or its fields
or any of the dust of the world.
- 27 I was there when he set the heavens in place,
when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,
- 28 when he established the clouds above
and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,
- 29 when he gave the sea its boundary
so the waters would not overstep his command,
and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.
- 30 Then I was the craftsman at his side.
I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in his presence,
- 31 rejoicing in his whole world
and delighting in mankind.
- 32 “Now then, my sons, listen to me;
blessed are those who keep my ways.
- 33 Listen to my instruction and be wise;
do not ignore it.
- 34 Blessed is the man who listens to me,
watching daily at my doors,
waiting at my doorway.

- 35 For whoever finds me finds life
and receives favor from the LORD.
36 But whoever fails to find me harms himself;
all who hate me love death.”

Wisdom's Identity

That they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

(Col. 2:3)

Section 1

ARTICLES ON CHRISTIAN
DEVOTION

Article 1

IS THE KINGDOM ANY RICHER?



Is the Kingdom any richer now, because you've walked the earth?
Are any giving praise to God and thankful for your birth?

Were you destined to rise high above the never-ceasing chatter
Of what occupies the mind of man, or does it even matter?

Did you cast aside the apathy and self-centeredness of ease,
With diligence and burning zeal did you stay upon your knees?

And cry to God to use your life and occupy your time,
To grope in darkness if perhaps through grace he'd let you find,

The fullness of this life of his—evasive as it seems;
Sometimes it's bright as noon-day...sometimes it seems a dream.

But lift the cross and follow up, embrace it as you go,
From death to death and life to life, both of them you'll know.

I've seen a seed fallen to the earth, be buried in the ground,
When scarcely death had swallowed it; behold new life was found!

How awesome then is truth contained that though I walk this earth,
If freely I'll embrace his death, the fruit of life he'll birth.

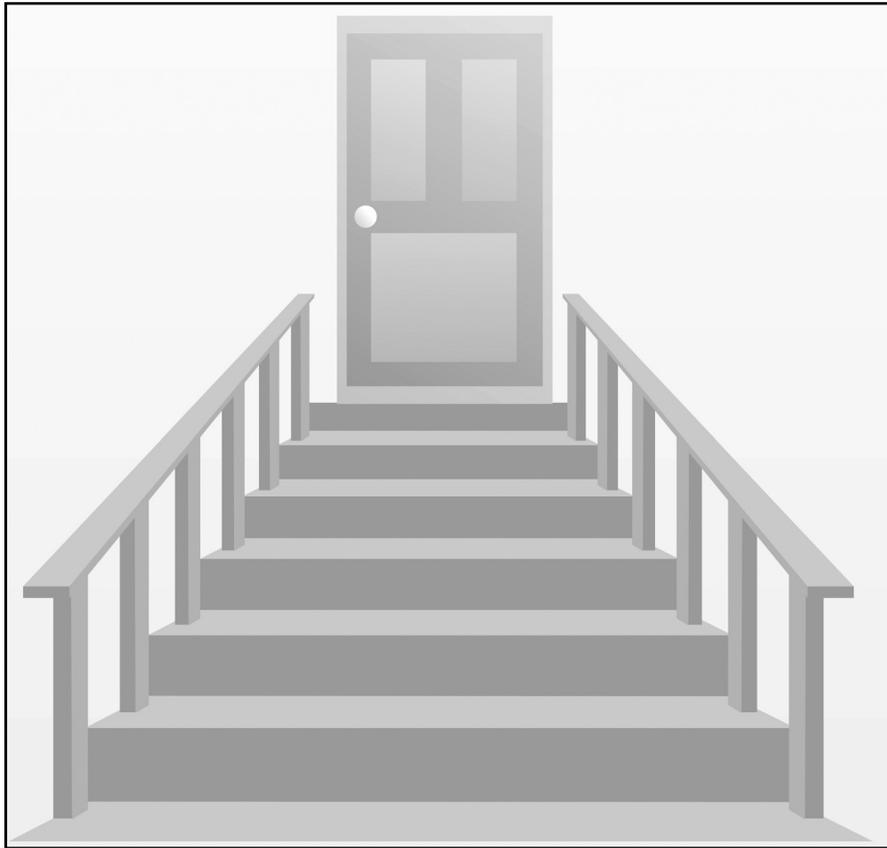
But if I cease to follow on, neglectful of the cross,
The sting of death awaits me then—the life I've lived is lost.

So onward now my vision clear, in darkness light I see,
That through this death to my own way I'm buried, Lord, with thee.

In hope I'll rest my anxious thoughts, the refuge of my soul,
And work 'til life for me runs out, for then I'll reach my goal.

BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

— Is Conversion an Act or
a Process—or Both? —



Introduction

What a *coincidence*! I just happen to have found a crumpled tract on the street that was advertising a massive youth conference in Dallas, Texas. What a *coincidence*! My mom just happened to find an old savings account that had the exact amount of the registration for the conference. What a *coincidence*! There just happened to be a van full of teens traveling from California right by my house in Tempe, Arizona, on the way to Dallas. In retrospect, I now can see that *divine providence* not merely *human coincidence* was guiding me to the most important decision of my life—my conversion to faith in Jesus Christ at 2:30 p.m. on June 18, 1972.

What a day of destiny that was for me. It marked the beginning of a life full of purpose and meaning that I would not trade for anything in the earth. Over the years, I have had ample opportunity to ponder the nature of my conversion experience and have discovered that conversion is probably best described as both a process and an event. Consider with me the following.

What Does Becoming a Christian Mean?

In the New Testament a Christian is synonymous with being a disciple (Acts 11:26). Furthermore, a disciple is a faithful and fruitful follower of Jesus Christ. To follow Christ means to pursue him with a whole heart (Matt. 22:37). Such a whole-hearted devotion will most certainly translate into attitudes and actions consistent with those of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. However, as every good student can attest, the mastery of any skill can require literally years of study and practice. Does that mean that becoming a Christian will take years before one can claim the title? The answer is “no” and “yes.”

The Answer Is “No”!

I put “no” first because the Bible teaches that if we, as an act of faith, believe in our heart (in Christ’s resurrection from the dead) and confess with our mouth that “Jesus is Lord,” we will most certainly be saved (Rom. 10:8–9). In other words, there can and does come a time when every genuine Christian has become sufficiently convinced of the divine Lordship of Jesus Christ. Such conviction then leads us to place our faith or trust in Christ, who we believe has the ability to restore our broken relationship with God.

The Answer Is “Yes!”

This point of conviction, however, may have taken us many years to arrive at. This is why some speak of the *process* of conversion rather than the *act* of conversion.² In my mind, both the act and process of conversion are mutually inclusive principles of faith. After all, can one really claim to have exercised the *act* of conversion if there is no continuation of faith? And conversely, can one claim to be in the *process* of conversion without that process leading to decisive acts of faith? In other words, the process of conversion leads to the act of justifying faith, just like the act of conversion leads to the process of continuing faith. Both are necessary if one is to become a faithful and fruitful follower-disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, the error of emphasizing one to the exclusion of the other has arguably produced generations of believers who are either fruitlessly self-confident or fearfully insecure vis-à-vis Protestants and Catholics respectively.

The truth is, my friend, if you are to become a genuine Christian it will involve both the act of faith and the process of believing.³ So the real question is both “Have you believed?” and “Are you believing?”

Have you believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to earth to die for your sins? Have you also believed that he has risen from the dead, thus guaranteeing your right standing (justification) before God? If so, then call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ right now and be saved! Confess the following verses of Scripture.

That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

(Rom. 10:9–11)

Are you continuing to believe by following Christ in prayer, study of his Word (the Bible), Christian fellowship, walking in the spirit, and testifying of his grace to others?⁴ If you have not done so, then repent (change your mind) and resolve (exercise faith) to begin again to be his faithful and fruitful follower for life. Confess the following verses.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

(1 John 1:9)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

(John 3:16)

Becoming a Christian is not just a decision you make once in a lifetime—it is a lifetime decision.