
LIFE! And My Favorite Bible Verse

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
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During last Sunday's "Dean's Forum," at one point I mentioned that the Sunday Episcopal lectionary "keeps the preacher and congregation honest." I meant that the lectionary presents us with a whole range of the Bible for study and preaching, not just our favorite verses over and over again. After class, someone asked me, reasonably enough, just what my favorite verse actually is.

Well, my favorite verse of the Bible varies. Bible verses are like Beatles' songs to me; at one point or another, almost every verse has been my favorite (well, not every verse). But my most usual answer is John 10:10, where Jesus says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." The reason I follow Jesus is because this journey of following him gives me life. It gives me, not just life, but **LIFE!** I mean exuberant, jubilant, joyful **LIFE!** I enjoy living, and I enjoy living life to its fullest; I find that I do that better as I follow Jesus better.


In fact, Jesus talks about life throughout the Gospel of John. At John 3:16, the writer says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." For me, that does not mean life that begins when we die; it means that God wants us to have life right now. In the same way, Jesus told the woman at the well, that "the water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

At John 5:21, Jesus says, "Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes." But at this verse, the word for "life" is actually contained in the verb. More literally, the verse means that the Father will "make them live," or "make live." For me, that means more than just that God gives me something objectively. Rather God makes me live; God makes life in me!

At John 6:35, Jesus identifies himself not simply as living water, but also as living bread. He says "I am the Bread of Life." That verse is the reason I use this phrase when I distribute the bread of communion: "The Body of Christ: the Bread of Life" (for me, a more biblical phrase).

Finally, of course, I use John 11:25 whenever I officiate a funeral; Jesus says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live." In fact, I have done many funerals lately. They are often sad, and we grieve; yet there is life in those celebrations of saints. Even though people have died, they are alive in Christ.

My favorite verses, then, are about life. Good religion is about giving life; good spirituality is about giving life, life that is abundant. That word "abundant" means even more than we might think; it means "Prodigious," or "Extraordinary," or "Uncommon," or "Exceeding the usual number or measure." Yes, that's it! Jesus really is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).



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