

CHAPTER 10DON'T CONFUSE THE PROCESS WITH THE PRODUCT

A process is a series of actions or operations that lead to an end. A product is that which is produced; the end result of a long process. For example, a birthday cake is a product. The process that leads to the finished birthday cake involves many steps, including mixing butter and sugar, breaking open eggs, mixing dry ingredients (flour, salt, baking soda, spices), mixing wet and dry ingredients, adding nuts and raisins, making icing, etc. How foolish it would be to watch the cook break the eggs and then say, "That's the cake!" No, it's only one step in the process of cake-making!

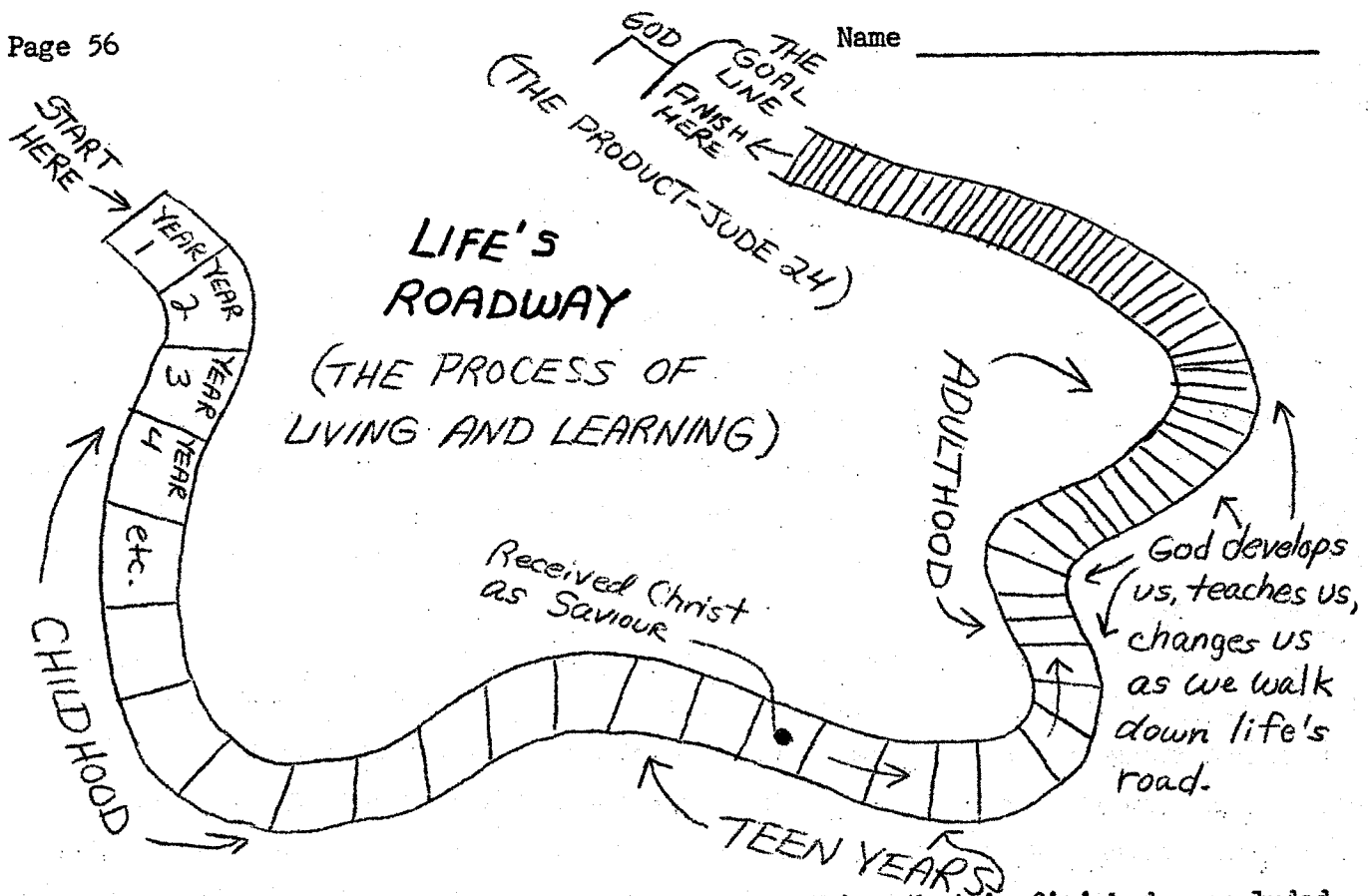
Consider the game of football. The product may be compared to scoring a touchdown (getting the ball to the goal line). The process involves all the plays and transactions that are necessary to bring the ball to the goal line. When the quarterback completes a pass, it would be foolish for him to jump up and down in excitement saying, "We've arrived! We've finished! We've reached our goal!" No, it's only a completed pass (one step, one play), not a touchdown. The same could be said of a first down. It's not a touchdown, it's only a first down (which is only one step in the process which may eventually lead to a touchdown).

What is the final and finished product of the Christian life? What is the GOAL to which every believer is headed (ROMANS 8:29)? "to be conformed to the _____ of His _____" (to be Christ-like; 1 John 3:2--"we shall be _____ Him"). Have you arrived at this goal yet? Do you think like Christ, act like Christ, speak like Christ, live like Christ? According to Philippians 3:13-14, had Paul already reached the goal line or was he in the process of pressing towards the goal line? _____

Consider Philippians 1:6. Has God finished that good work which He began in you (if you are really saved)? _____ Will God finish that good work which He started in you? _____

As we have been studying in previous chapters, we are in the process of walking down the road of rightness. We have not yet reached the end of the road! Life's journey is made up of a series of steps (a series of stages or transactions) which will eventually bring me to the finish line. But I have not reached the finish line yet!

This is illustrated by the diagram on the next page:



Life is a series of steps. It is not something that is finished, concluded and done. For example, when a child recovers from the mumps, he may think, "I'm all finished with sickness! It's all over!" However, the mumps was only one in a series of sicknesses! Measles, the flu, colds and many other illnesses will follow in the process of growing older in a sin-cursed world. Only death itself can bring an end to sickness (compare Revelation 21:4).

Be careful not to look at one event (or transaction) in your life and somehow think you have arrived at the finish line: "If only I could be in High School, my problems would be over!" "When I pass this exam, then I'll be finished!" "Tomorrow I may get my driver's license! This is my final goal!" "I have not yet arrived in life because I do not yet have a boyfriend (or girlfriend)." "If I graduate next year, then it will be all finished!" "If I could get a job my present difficulties would come to an end." "Soon I'll be able to leave home and my worries will be over!"

Adults make similar mistakes (see the top of page 45), when they fail to realize that school, home, marriage partner, employment, etc. are all just part of the process, not the finished product!

Everything is in a constant process of change. You are changing every day. You live in a changing world. People are changing. The world political situation is changing. Your body is changing as it steadily grows older. Places are changing (old buildings torn down, new buildings erected, etc.). All of these changing conditions demand that you pay attention. The unchanging God (Malachi 3:6) is doing something!

As I live in my changing world, I go through certain experiences (dealing with people, problems, places, pressures, etc.). Each stage of my living is but the stepping stone to the next stage--no one stage is the end or final stopping place. Each experience EXERCISES me (forces me to tackle the problems) and ENLIGHTENS me (makes me think) and ENLARGES me (builds my character and makes me a stronger person) and makes me EFFECTIVE (capable and more able to cope with things). As a result, I am learning to relate to the real world in the realm of reality. I am able to face self, society, sin, my Saviour and the sovereignty of God (that God is able to take all the events and transactions of my life and work them together for good so that in the end I might be conformed to the image of Christ--Romans 8:28-29).

Walking With God

In Genesis 5:22 and 5:24 we learn that Enoch _____ with God. This means that Enoch lived in close and intimate fellowship with God as he moved down life's road and made progress). Who also walked with God (Genesis 6:9)?

_____ In Genesis 17:1 God spoke to Abram and said, "I am the Almighty God, _____ before Me." To walk before God means to be conscious (mindful) of God as you walk and live, to realize God's continued presence, to consider who He is ("the Almighty One"). Life is a series of steps (A WALK), and as we walk we are to remember God and be conscious of Him. If you are saved, to go to school is not the primary reason why you are living today. School is but a step in the process. How we take each step is important. Each step leads to the next step. The next step comes READY OR NOT. The 13 year old reaches 14 years and then 15 years---20 years---30 years---etc. The clock does not stop. The primary reason why you are alive is to REPRESENT GOD and walk with Him. When you are doing this, you will be surprised at how it will make you a better student as well!

God's Masterpiece

In Ephesians 2:10 the Bible says, "For we (believers saved by grace through faith--see verses 8-9) are His (God's) _____, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." We are God's masterpiece! Think of a great artist who begins to paint a masterpiece of art. After the first few strokes of the brush it would be silly to say, "The masterpiece is finished! It is completed!" No, the artist has not yet finished his work. He is still working on it and he will not be finished until the last stroke of the brush (compare Philipians 1:6). The painting is in process, and the process includes a whole series of brush strokes!

Has the Master Artist finished working in your life? God is in the process of painting a picture, changing a life and creating a masterpiece! Be patient! God is not finished yet! God is using the changing world, changing people, changing places and changing problems to create a masterpiece!

Bored With Life?

Life is filled with things that are repeated again and again: "I did that already!" "I heard that joke before!" "I ate that before, can't I have something different to eat?" "Dishes again? I just washed dirty dishes yesterday and the day before!"

When things are repeated we often become bored with the "sameness." We do not see anything new or fresh. As a result, we stop making progress. We fail to realize that in the middle of the "sameness" God wants to show us something that is new and fresh and different. Most of all, even we are becoming different. We act or react differently. Our attitude towards things and persons changes. The same dishes are there, but there is a new view of them by a changing you! Even in what seems to be endless repetition, God wants us to learn some new and fresh truth.

The same is true in reading the Bible. Someone might say, "Why do I need to look at John 3:16. I already know that verse and I've heard it a thousand times!" But God wants to take that familiar verse and make it fresh and new to us! God wants us to look at it again and think about it afresh! There is much that God still wants to teach us about this precious verse, but it's impossible to teach someone who thinks he knows it all already!

A carpenter is not a carpenter because he builds one shelf. There are many men who have built shelves who are not carpenters. A person becomes a carpenter as a result of a whole series of works and a whole series of experiences working with boards, hammers, nails, saws, etc.

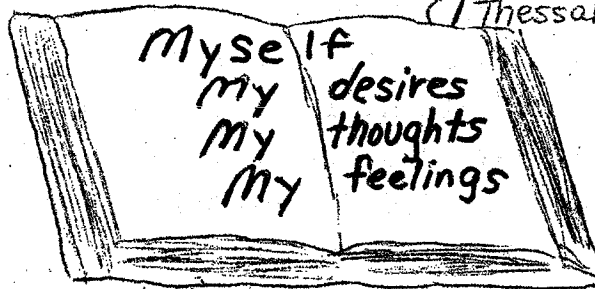
Suppose one day a carpenter drives in a nail crooked. Should he say, "I've failed! It's all over! I hit this nail in the wrong way and I'm no longer worthy of being a carpenter!" ? Obviously not, and yet often we act in the same way! "If I succeed today, then I'm a success; if I fail today, then I'm a failure and it's all over!" Today is not the end! Today is just one step in life's long journey! Stop feeling sorry for yourself, learn from your sins and failures and continue walking with God and making progress.

Has God quit working in you (Philippians 1:6; 2:13; Hebrews 13:21)? _____
Then, if God does not quit, you can keep at it too!

As I walk on God's road, I must carefully examine myself lest I should detour to the right or to the left (Deuteronomy 5:32; Joshua 1:7). I should weigh upon God's Word

- what I am (put myself on God's Word--Psalm 139:23-24)
- what I want (put my desires on God's Word to see if they are His desires)
- what I think (put my thoughts on God's Word to see if they are correct)
- what I feel (put my feelings on God's Word to see if they are right)

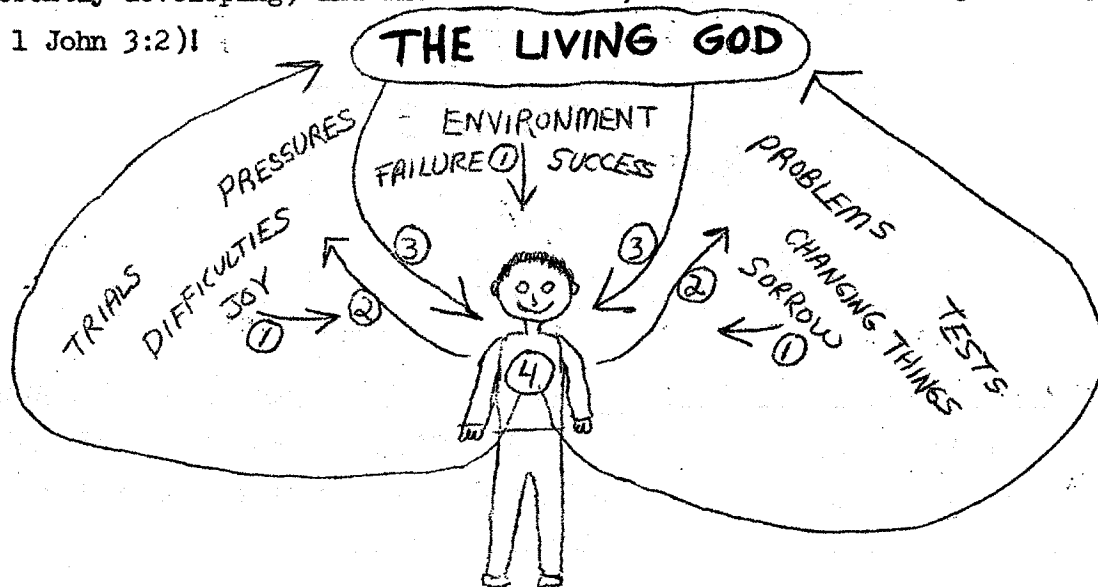
"Weigh all things and test all things by the Word of God" (1 Thessalonians 5:21)



↑ GOD'S WORD ↑

Every day is a new opportunity to be EXERCISED, ENLARGED and ENLIGHTENED!

From all my experiences I am learning that there is a great God who is in the process of changing me and bringing me to the goal line! What I am now is different from what I was when God first started working in me, and God is not finished yet! The environment and situations all around me (trials, tests, problems, pains, failures, joys, sorrows, etc.) are all being used of God to change me. I'm a person that God is presently developing, and when He is done, it will be a masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 3:2)!



- ① The changing environment works on me.
- ② I face life and tackle life's problems.
- ③ God uses life's problems and struggles to work on me.
- ④ I work at being conscious of God (Genesis 17:1) and including Him in my situation.

God is working in me. To do this He constantly brings me into various situations of life (one event after another). I need to make sure that I bring God into every situation. This is my part and my responsibility. I can enter the situation without God (leaving God out) or I can enter the situation with God (including Him and being conscious of Him).

For example, suppose you were to face a difficult exam in school. God has brought you into this situation. Are you going to bring God into the situation? Are you going to trust Him and look to Him as you study? Or, are you going to leave God out and worry and fret as if you have no heavenly Father who cares for you? If you include God in your situation, it will show to others: "Why are you so calm about this exam? You act as if everything is alright!" Don't copy the world, but let God do something on the inside of you that will show itself on the outside (see Romans 12:2)! Let God transform that exam (test) into a wonderful event which will help to develop you and make you in the direction of the person God wants you to be. Keep God in the middle of the situation!

THE PROCESS

ROMANS 8:28

God working all things (events, situations, problems) together for good

THE PRODUCT

ROMANS 8:29

A transformed person!
"See My Son in that one!"

Remember the words "and it came to pass" (which we frequently read in the Bible). All the ACTIVITIES, ACTIONS, PERSONS, THINGS, PROBLEMS, etc. will pass and you will be left alone to face God. HOW WILL YOUR FINISH BE? See 2 Timothy 4:7-8.