

**L**earning to  
Live in the



**Lionel Hartley**

# Introduction

One of my sons is presently urging upon my time for automobile driving lessons. On both the front and also on the rear of his vehicle there is displayed an “L” plate, advising (or perhaps warning) other drivers of his learner status. While looking at and contemplating this letter “L”, I came to think of adjectives that begin with “L” (other than “learner”) that may perhaps be used to describe this not-yet-perfect driver. In sad reflection, I confess that the adjectives and the few nouns that came to mind were less than complimentary. When I realised that I was thinking thus, I deliberately began to stretch my mind to think of some positive “L” words. I am reminded that Jesus at divers times called Himself such titles as Lamb, Lion, Light, Lord, Last Adam, Life, Logos, Love and even a Loaf of bread.. It was while thinking upon these lines that some of the chapter headings\* in the complete volume of *Learning to Live in the Last Days* (Life’s Driving Lessons) came to mind. For the benefit of those attending the GNU 2000 seminars, a truncated version here follows. Although almost three decades of safe automobile driving gives me at least some qualification to teach my children to drive, when it comes to Life in these Last Days, I have much to learn. It is therefore without pretension that we – you and I together – explore *Learning to Live in the Last Days*.

- Lionel Hartley, January 2000

\*(Chapter headings in the full volume included, Learning to learn, Learning to live, Learning to love, Learning to let go, Learning to long for eternity, Learning to linger, Learning to listen, Learning to labour, Learning to ladle to others, Learning to laud, Learning to laugh, Learning to lead, and learning to leave.)

Learning To Live in the Last Days  
Dr Lionel D C Hartley  
Special (truncated) seminar edition  
Published by Good News Unlimited  
P O Box 6788 (2/54-60 Industry Drive)  
South Tweed Heads NSW 2486 Australia  
Telephone/Fax (07) 5524 5040  
email [goodnews@coolgold.com.au](mailto:goodnews@coolgold.com.au)  
Website: [goodnewsunlimited.org.au](http://goodnewsunlimited.org.au)

First abridged edition Copyright ©2000 Lionel Hartley.  
Condensed from Lionel Hartley, *Learning to Live in the Last Days (Life's Driving Lessons)*,  
L&R Hartley, ©1988 - Used with permission.  
This edition dedicated to (and proofread by) Patricia Tedman.  
All rights reserved in all countries. No part of this  
book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever  
without written permission except in the case of brief quotations  
embodied in critical articles and reviews.  
Typeset in Book Antiqua font and illustrated by Lionel Hartley, PhD  
email: [admin@lrhartley.com](mailto:admin@lrhartley.com)

# earning to Learn

We are living in Earth's last days. Robert Macfarlane, in a sermon (Nov. 10, 1992 - cited in *Christianity Today*, Vol.37, no.2), said 'The church speaks the language of the End, so that we will know just how high the stakes are in the present.' One of the first lessons we need to learn, is to learn to learn - to adopt a teachable attitude and to be discerning amidst the plethora of would-be teachers. The importance of following the right teacher is highlighted in the old Arab proverb, "An army of sheep led by a lion would defeat an army of lions led by a sheep." Will you be led by the Lion of Judah (the Good Shepherd) or would you choose to be led by a sheep?

The Reverend B. Carradine tells of an experience he encountered in a large jeweller's store where he noticed the counters and shelves loaded and lined with timepieces of every description. There were clocks, handsome and plain, large and small, alarms, chimes, gongs and cuckoo; there were one day, eight days, two weeks and one month timekeepers, until the eye was fairly bewildered with the variety, and the ear distracted with their different sounds.

One special timepiece (not for sale) acted as a great regulator. It was fully two metres in length and hung in the clear light close to the broad and lofty display window. It struck no hour, made no ticking sound, but kept time for all the other clocks in the store, and for everybody in town besides, with a solemn, steady swing, whose regularity nothing in the shop inside and nothing on the pavement and street outside in the least disturbed or affected.

Carradine relates how he and his companion noticed that the timepieces nearest the regulator were accurate in their pointing and striking. They also seemed ready for service and delivery, looked bright, seemed to be oiled up, and appeared all right every way. Their inner and outer life agreed. Their outward testimony did but reflect and declare the correctness and faithfulness of the internal machinery and hidden life.

It was delightful to see how they agreed with the regulator, and when the greater machine lifted its hands in a certain position, they

did the same; and when the larger pointed to a certain hour, the faithful little band nearest the light, all sounded out the true time without a disagreeing voice.

But the farther down the store Carradine and his companion went, and the greater distance from the regulator, the more they were impressed with the inexact pointing, wrong striking and general disagreement among the congregation of timekeepers. Made to be helpers and directors, and needing to be true and accurate, they were wrong and did not even agree among themselves. According to their testimony, it was every hour of the day. It was really 12 o'clock, and yet suddenly, one with a deep, solemn note that admitted of no contradiction, insisted it was three in the afternoon. That testimony had scarcely died away when another clock, a round-faced, fiery, little fellow in a corner, as if in a perfect fury at being overlooked and differed from, whirred forth, and rattled off at a hasty rate the hour of ten. This was promptly disputed a moment later by an old eight-day wooden affair, that, with rumbling wheels and tin pan accent, affirmed that it was as late as seven in the evening.

So the divergent and discordant experiences went on with the additional grotesque feature that some struck one way and pointed another! Still farther down the aisle the clocks were all silent. Some had run down, some had never been wound up, and so a profound stillness prevailed in that part of the store. The farther the time indicators and declarers were from the regulator, the worse seemed to be their condition.

In a room back of the store was a sight still more gruesome, of clocks in every stage of disintegration and dissolution. Springs, hands, pendulums, dial plates, wire coils, strikers, sounders, and every kind of brass, wheel and iron mechanism lay on the floor, while the wooden and metal frames were heaped up in corners as so much tinder, or refuse and scrap piles.

In these last days, I hardly need to declare this self-evident parable to the reader, as we have only to look around to behold the differences, divisions and distractions in the religious world. Men and women on every side are clamouring and insisting that they are right, and every one else wrong. That they have the only true

machinery, and keep the only correct spiritual time. You have to come to them to know who you are and where you are. They know exactly the periods and seasons of the world itself. Nonessential doctrines are pointed to, and false teachings are held up. The strangest, wildest experiences are beat, banged, screamed, screeched and cuckoo-ed all over the country. Listen to the clocks! Meantime no two of these manifold divisions agree. Hands diverge, voices conflict, testimonies war, statements contradict, and the medley and confusion is mind-distracting, ear-deafening and heart-sickening beyond words to describe. Then there are some who once pointed right, and sounded the true and correct spiritual note, who are now cold, silent, and dead. Still others have utterly gone to pieces, and lie forgotten in the Devil's Scrap Shop.

We might well despair if we did not have the Great Regulator of Heaven in our midst. Christ is left. He still points out the way and declares the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Around him are gathered some, who, regulated, oiled and wound up, are in doctrine, life, word and deed, in harmony and faithful agreement with him. And yet in these days of wrangling, jangling and general confusion and discord in the religious world, our comfort, strength and inspiration are not derived from the sight of the faithful few in the land who are true to God; but from the knowledge that the Great Regulator, Christ, has come into the world. He has been lifted up in our midst. He is never to be taken down until his work is accomplished. He himself will not faint or be discouraged until his labour has been performed and redemption achieved. And it will be done.

In these final days of earth's history let us look to and learn from Christ the Great Regulator – look and learn and live (Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2)).

# **L**earning to Live

For many, living is mere survival – lives lived by the gospel according to children’s writer Lewis Carroll: ‘Begin at the beginning ... and go on till you come to the end: then stop’. I recall from my childhood the school playground resounding with a chant to modulate the tempo of a body of skipping children. They sang, ‘Solomon Grundy, Born on Monday, Christened on Tuesday, Married on Wednesday, Sick on Thursday, Worse on Friday, Died on Saturday, Buried on Sunday. This is the end of Solomon Grundy.’ Is this all there is to life? How do we get more out of life?

Selfish as I am, I believe that one of the best ways to get, is to give. Wordsworth, in his *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*, said, ‘The best portion of a good man's life (is)/ His little, nameless, unremembered acts / Of kindness and of love.’

The following anonymous poem prompted me to write *The Leaven of the Spirit* in July 1997: ‘My life shall touch a dozen lives / Before this day is done, / Leave countless marks - for good or ill / E’re sets the evening sun. / This is the wish I always wish / The prayer I always pray, / “Lord may my life help other lives / It touches by the way”.’

## *The Leaven of the Spirit*

‘Lord, You are the bread of life.  
Make me, Lord, a slice of thee;  
May life for me be Spirit filled -  
The leaven swelling up in me.

The silent unseen working  
Transforming lazy flour  
Into holy-air filled bubbling life;  
Risen, baked, and given power!

So life no longer is a loaf  
Of wasted energy.  
Lord, may the crumbs I leave behind,  
Draw other souls to thee.’

# **L**earning to Linger

Nowhere in the Bible does it say to **get** ready for the last days. However, we are ever admonished to **be** ready. For example, Matthew 24:44, 'Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.' In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, Jesus says, '[when] the bridegroom came ... they **that were ready** went in with him (Matthew 25:10). If in our patience for the Lord's return we are going to linger – to walk slowly for him – we need to learn how.

Peter admonishes, 'But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and **be ready always** to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear' (I Peter 3:15. See also Titus 3:1 and II Corinthians 9:3 & 5).

History tells us the King of Hungary had become deeply concerned about his salvation. He saw himself justly condemned before God for his sins. He could make no atonement for them, and might hear the trumpet call at any moment to come to judgment, and he was unprepared. He knew he must be condemned unless he had a deliverer. He manifested great concern for his personal salvation. His whole court saw his anxiety. His own brother, a frivolous worldly man, trifled with his feelings and the whole subject of religion, and indicated that he had no fears, and desired the king to be cheerful, and dismiss the subject from his mind.

The king, to convince his brother that they both had great cause for alarm while out of Christ, secretly arranged for an imitation of the death trumpet to be sounded at his brother's door in the dead hour of night. The custom of the country in those days was, that if the executioner came and sounded the trumpet before any man's door, he was presently to be led to execution. The worldly brother heard the death trumpet at his door and saw the executioner, who said, 'Be ready!'

The brother sprang from his bed, and rushed into the presence



of the king to plead for mercy and forgiveness. The king said, 'Alas, brother, if the sight of my executioner is so dreadful to you, shall not I, who have so greatly offended God, fear to be brought before the judgment seat of Christ. Have I not the greatest excuse for anxiety? Shall we not both seek the atoning blood of Christ at once? If the sounding of an earthly executioners trumpet is so dreadful, how will the trumpet-call from the high court of heaven sound to one unprepared?' (*Story adapted from A. B. Earle, From Incidents Used (in his meetings), published in 1888*)

## earning to Long for Eternity

It is easy, is it not, to be swept into the realm of speculation when we talk about the hereafter? Interestingly, the Bible devotes a considerably smaller space to describing eternity than it does to emphasising to people **the necessity of being ready** to receive this free gift from God. Most biblical descriptions of eternity could, perhaps, be more accurately called sneak previews only, since they use terms, concepts and ideas from our present earthly, sin-filled, ecologically unbalanced, ageing, and limited experience to describe something that we shall not fully comprehend until we get there ourselves when Jesus comes.

However, there are certain things we **can** know about eternity.

There is a place prepared for us

John 14:2, 3, NLB (New Living Bible Translation - Tyndale House Publishing) 'There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.'

It is unlimited by physical properties

1 Corinthians 15:35-49 and John 20:19, 26

We are going to be like Jesus

1 John 3:2 'Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.' (NLB)

We are to have new bodies

1 Corinthians 15

We are to enjoy a wonderful new experience

1 Corinthians 2:9 'That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."' (NLB)

We are to experience a totally new environment

Revelation 21:1 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.' (NLB)

We will share a new experience of God's presence

1 Corinthians 13:12 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.' (KJV) and Revelation 21:3 'I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them."' (NLB)

We will experience new emotions

Revelation 21:4 'He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever.' (NLB)

And there will be no more death

Revelation 21:4 '... There will be no more death...'

# Learning to Leave

When and how will the world end?

T S Elliot ends his drama *The Wasteland* with these words, 'This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper.'

Thirty years ago, I saved a clipping from the Louisville Courier Journal (February 5, 1970) which said, 'Men who are not in the habit of making extravagant or rash statements talk about the end of the world in from ten to thirty years. For example, George Wald, Nobel prizewinning biologist at Harvard, was quoted recently as saying that life on earth is threatened with extinction in the next 15 to 30 years.' Robert Frost wrote, 'Some say the world will end in fire, / Some say in ice. / From what I've tasted of desire / I hold with those who favour fire. / But if it had to perish twice / I think I know enough of hate / To say that for destruction, ice / Is also great / And would suffice.' - Robert Frost, Complete Poems of Robert frost, Holt Rinehart & Wilson Inc, 1930

There are those who believe that the world will end when the Christ returns, in fact, convinced that he was about to return soon, the Sydney branch of the Order of the Star of the East built a large amphitheatre at Balmoral in 1924 so that believers could watch him appear on the water at Sydney Heads. Seats for this spectacle were sold at the time for prices ranging from five pounds to one thousand pounds. After allowing for miscalculations and heavenly delays (according to *The Post*, 13 December 1984, p2) the building was demolished. The hymnologist Fredrick W. Faber (1814-63) wrote, 'God is our Last End as well as our First Cause. God possessed, our own God, that is creation's home, our last end, there only is our rest. Another day is gone, another week is passed, another year is told. Blessed be God, then, we are nearer to the end. It comes swiftly; it comes slowly, too. Come it must, and then it will be all but a dream to look back upon.'

How we live now will determine how we die. If we look to his life and live in his will we will die in his victory. Look then and live—look unto Jesus, the Author and **Finisher** of our faith (Hebrews 12:2)