

What God Wishes Christians Knew About Christianity. By Bill Gillham. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1998, 382 pp. Paper.

The author of the popular *“Lifetime Guarantee”* has written another Christian living book designed to get Christians to think. In the course of eighteen chapters, Gillham shares eighteen principles that he believes God wishes Christians recognized and applied. Gillham writes with a passion and persuasion likely to woo his readers.

In the first chapter, Gillham suggests that Christ is a “triple threat” Savior. He means through Christ’s death, we are forgiven all of our sins, have undergone a change in our identity from sinner to saint, and have received new life—Christ as life, to replace our former life (p. 13). In the next five chapters, Gillham sets forth several valuable truths. (1) The cycle of sin that many believers are trapped in is not God’s intention for Christians (pp. 31-38). (2) The victorious Christian life can only be achieved through an abiding relationship with Christ (pp. 39-50). (3) At the moment of salvation, Christians are given the life of Christ, not merely positionally but actually (pp. 51-66). (4) As Christians appropriate the desires of the new nature, the conditions of discipleship will be carried out (pp. 67-91). (5) The sin nature is extinct; Christians now battle the flesh (pp. 93-117). These six chapters are accurate and insightful.

Gillham writes many other fine chapters as well. He delves into the biblical model of sanctification (pp. 181-202) and counseling (pp. 285-303), the role of faith (pp. 221-235) and suffering (pp. 237-257) in the Christian life, and the importance of recognizing and appropriating our identity in Christ (pp. 305-375).

Many readers will be especially interested in chapter 14: “God wishes Christians knew that we are being trained on earth to reign in heaven” (pp. 259-284). Gillham discusses topics like “Admission versus Maturation,” and “Acceptance versus Approval” (see “Confident in Christ,” pp.). Although he only takes a cursory look at a few passages (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Peter 1:5-10; Rev. 19:7-8), it is nonetheless interesting to read his perspective on the Bema. He seems to take the “teeth” out of the Bema by writing that every Christian shall reign (p. 266); however, much of what he writes is fairly accurate.

Unfortunately, not all of Gillham's interpretations and principles are to be esteemed. In chapters 7-8 (pp. 119-180), he insists that in several passages in the gospels (e.g. Matt. 5:7-9, 20, 22, 25-26, 30, 48; 6:14-15; Luke 11:13) Jesus was speaking to those under the law who were unsaved. He even suggests that the disciples were not regenerated until Pentecost (p. 148). Gillham also believes that when the gospels and epistles seem to conflict, the epistles should win out (pp. 159-179). For example, in chapter 11 (pp. 203-220), he suggests Jesus presented the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:22-35) to unregenerate listeners "with the motive of whetting their appetite for the Savior" (p. 209). This allows him to interpret 1 John 1:9 in an evangelistic sense, rather than in a fellowship sense. However, he does acknowledge that confession has its place for Christians (James 5:16, see p. 214).

This book is grounded in a liberating grace-oriented theology. Gillham is clear on the gospel and assurance. He writes, "...admission to heaven is based solely upon faith in the finished work of Christ" (p. 262). He is also a clever, humorous, and entertaining writer. This easy to read book is definitely worthwhile if one is looking for insight into the believer's new nature or pertinent illustrations and case studies on how to live the Christian life. However, the above concerns should be noted as one works his way through the book.