



THE FIELD IS THE WORLD

The Skinner Family Prayer Letter

Dear Family and Friends:

The classic film "It's a Wonderful Life" is a holiday favorite, reminding us that life is a blessing, despite challenges. This movie has always been a favorite in our family and I have been giving it much thought in recent weeks, since our homeschool co-op drama class just finished a 3-show run of it as a "radio theater." (Emily had small parts in some of the "commercial breaks." Turn to the back for some photos!)

Many of us will watch this charming film once again over the holidays. We'll have reason to reflect on our own lives in light of the disappointments and successes of the "everyman," George Bailey.

But because of the movie's simplicity, it is easy to stop short of its richer meaning. It closes with friends around a Christmas tree singing "Auld Lang Syne," and this can seem the very message of the film - that "old times" and friendships must be cherished. I'm not saying that it has a fully-developed Christian message, but there are a few points on the outline between which we may fill in our own meaning.

Like George, we begin life with a sense of entitlement, ready to conquer **the world**. But life gets in the way. *Both on the larger scale*, as the Stock Market Crash and the War illustrate, *as well as on the small scale*, as the need to subjugate and delay our own ambitions to those of others illustrates. Along the way, **sin** further complicates things, shown in the carelessness of others indicated by the boys' playing on thin ice, the pharmacist's near-poisoning of the little girl and abuse of George, or George's abuse of his own family and the concerned teacher. The wicked Henry Potter might be a reflection of **Satan** himself in his evil ambitions to rule and solicitations to rebel. But **heaven's** intervention is both *judicial*, (seen in the review of George's life), and *redemptive*, (seen in the intervention that provides the premise for the story). The angel "Clarence" slyly works in an essential point of connection as an "afterthought:" by literally *substituting himself for George* in the presumed **suicide attempt by drowning** and provoking George to embrace that baptism to follow him.

As a child, I remember thinking was that the movie was all about playing a part for the common good, friendship and nostalgia. But I was missing the point. Even within the storyline of the movie, there is an essential hint of something greater than this life, in the review and visitation of heaven. Life's true meaning is more than doing good for others and rejecting selfish ambition.



I recently heard someone, though claiming to have been a religious studies major, describing "immortality" in this way: "planting a tree, building a house, or raising a child."

"Religious studies" aside, this is a pale shadow of eternal life. The use of the word "immortality" to describe things that are by definition *mortal*, (houses—trees—even children)!, sounds like simple defiance of our own mortality rather than an embrace of it. (Or maybe a better word than "defiance" of mortality is "yearning" for eternity—see Ecclesiastes 3:1-11)

Heaven *does* review our lives, evaluating the true significance of them. Moreover, not content to leave us ignorant of the eternal meaning of our existence, heaven *entered* human life. Jesus embraced death, not just for an everyman like George Bailey, but for every man. (Hebrews 2:9) With Him we share a communion. Not just the remembrance of His broken body and shed blood, but the common experience of temptation, weakness, mourning, poverty, abuse of others in this fallen world -- and flesh and blood itself.

The flesh and blood that embraced this weakness and deprivation from the time of the Manger to the Cross *is now entered into the very presence of God for us*. He doesn't only *evaluate* our lives but *intercedes* for us and ordains good works for us to walk out. He'll show us the significance of that work - His work in us - through the ages to come. It's because of His example, His promise and His character that we may be assured that we will follow Him. And if we are to follow Him to Heaven, we must follow Him on earth, (John 10:27), and trust His good will, His good providence, through our own humbling, and even perhaps our own death, claiming the victory by faith along the way. Rejection of selfish ambition is still there, but for a higher purpose: trust in the good plan of God for our lives.

That plan is outlined in our <http://nativity.godlife.com> website! Why don't you use the season as a reason to share

what makes life wonderful to you by putting a link in your e-mail signature so that your friends can visit (like 45,255 visitors have so far today)?

Merry Christmas!
Mike James Cindy Skinner

Mike & Cindy

"One day closer!" (Romans 13:11)





"It's a Wonderful Life" main cast



Emily's 8th grade girls "commercial" group



Mom and Dad's private photo with the on-air personality



Luke and Emily with buddy Josiah



Luke's drum lesson



Luke's tiny snake

