The background of the entire page is a stylized, high-contrast illustration of a baseball field. It features large, flat areas of green for the grass and yellow for the dirt, with simple white lines representing the base paths and outfield. In the upper center, a pitcher is shown in mid-throw. In the lower left, a batter is swinging at a pitch. In the lower right, a catcher is crouched in position. The overall style is minimalist and graphic.

WHAT INNING IS YOUR LIFE IN?

The following is an account of the conversion of Ty Cobb, one of baseball's all-time greats who played 3,033 games and for 12 years led the American League in batting average. For four years, he batted over 400. On his deathbed, July 17, 1961, he said, "You tell the boys I'm sorry it was the last part of the ninth that I came to know Christ. I wish it had taken place in the first half of the first."

Just as baseball has nine innings so the days of your life are numbered. To many, success in life is achieving status, doing good works and keeping the Ten Commandments. They assume this gives them the right to eternal life. They erroneously believe when life is over God, the final Umpire of life, will declare them safe at home. It's impossible to achieve a right standing before God without first knowing Jesus Christ personally. Like so many, you can succeed in life, have status, and achieve quite a reputation but not have salvation.

The Scriptures say all your works, of your own ability, apart from Christ, will not achieve the right standing you need to safely reach home base, that is, have eternal life (Titus 3:5, Eph. 2:8-9).

Man's condition without Christ is clearly stated in Scripture. "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving many lusts, and pleasures, living in malice and envy, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

Does that describe you?

The world and the devil are pitching curve balls at your life and they have a good record of striking people out. Without Christ as your Savior, you will strike out. When you die, you will stand before God to give account of your life.

The Bible says, "It's appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment" (Heb.9:27). We all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account of our life (Rom.14:10-12).

It's inescapable!

When your life is over, a preacher can tell of your goodness and all your achievements in this world. But what does God say? As the Umpire of life, He alone gives the final verdict. Is your goodness enough to be worthy of eternal life?

Be honest, have you ever broken one of God's Ten Commandments? Have you ever lied, stolen, committed adultery, had premarital sex or sexual fantasies in your heart? God considers lust to be adultery of the heart. Have you ever coveted another's possessions? Have you wished someone dead and therefore committed murder in your heart? Have you used God's name to curse?

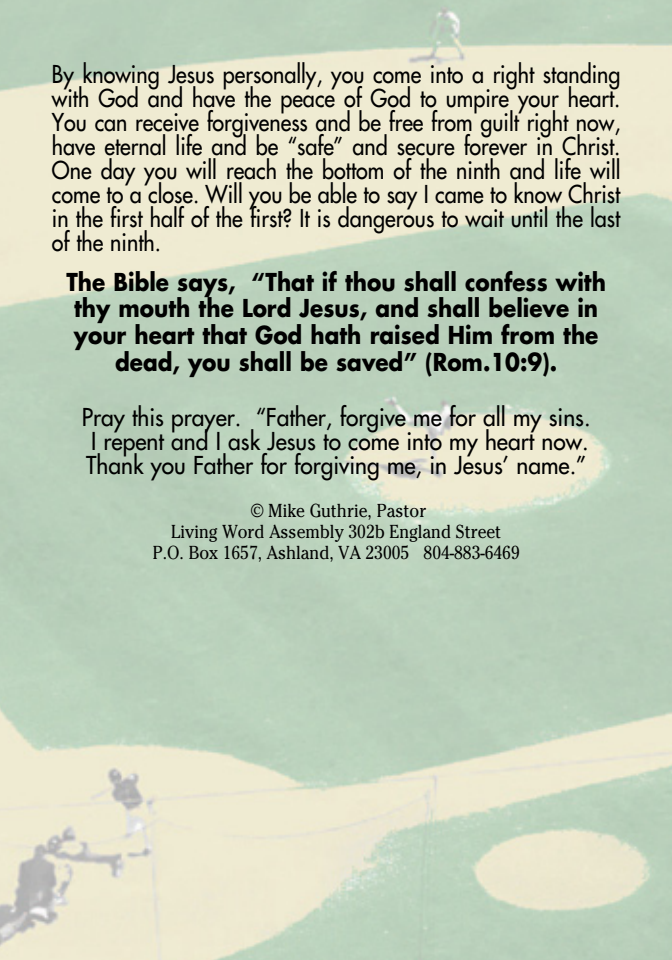
If you have committed one of these, you're guilty.

The Ten Commandments were given to reveal to man he is a sinner by nature, and he can only be saved from the wrath of God by receiving Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour.

God's Word says that all men are sinners by nature. The Bible says, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "None are righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10).

As you run the bases in life toward home plate - heaven - will you hear God, the Umpire of life, say "SAFE"?

Don't try to play it safe in life without Christ. You may hit a few good curves and think you've beat the world and the devil at life, but you are only deceiving yourself. You determine your eternal destiny by the choice you make to receive or reject Jesus Christ. When you reach home plate you will hear one of two decrees, "Well done thy good and faithful servant," 'SAFE!' or "Depart from me you wicked and slothful servant," 'OUT!' Jesus said, "He that hears my word, and believes on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).



By knowing Jesus personally, you come into a right standing with God and have the peace of God to umpire your heart. You can receive forgiveness and be free from guilt right now, have eternal life and be "safe" and secure forever in Christ. One day you will reach the bottom of the ninth and life will come to a close. Will you be able to say I came to know Christ in the first half of the first? It is dangerous to wait until the last of the ninth.

The Bible says, "That if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom.10:9).

Pray this prayer. "Father, forgive me for all my sins. I repent and I ask Jesus to come into my heart now. Thank you Father for forgiving me, in Jesus' name."

© Mike Guthrie, Pastor
Living Word Assembly 302b England Street
P.O. Box 1657, Ashland, VA 23005 804-883-6469