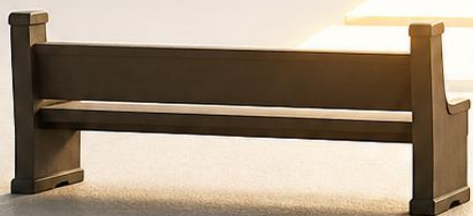


# Beyond The Pew

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A Call to Authentic Discipleship



— PAUL JOSEPH —

BEYOND THE PEW

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**A Call to Authentic Discipleship**

**PAUL JOSEPH**

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# Publishing Note



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BEYOND THE PEW

# A Word Before We Begin



*“The time for lukewarm faith is over.  
The world does not need more silent  
believers sitting safely in the pew.”*

— from the Preface

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# Preface



This book was written with one burden: to call believers back to the life Jesus actually commanded.

Christianity was never meant to stop at church attendance, religious language, or private belief. Jesus did not call admirers. He called disciples. He called men and women who would follow Him, obey His Word, carry His love, demonstrate His Kingdom, and make disciples wherever they go.

Beyond The Pew is a call to leave passive Christianity behind and step into active faith. It is a call to move from hearing to doing, from comfort to obedience, from religious routine to Spirit-filled discipleship. The church was never meant to be a place where believers hide from the world. It was meant to be a training ground where sons and daughters of God are equipped to carry Christ into the world.

As you read, do not approach these pages as information only. Read with a heart ready to respond. Let the Word search you, strengthen you, correct you, and awaken you. The goal is not merely to know more about discipleship. The goal is to become one.

The time for lukewarm faith is over. The world does not need more silent believers sitting safely in the pew. It needs disciples who carry the life, love, truth, and power of Jesus wherever they go.

May this book stir your faith, sharpen your conviction, and help you answer the call of Christ with a surrendered heart: “Lord, I will follow You.”

# Introduction



Amidst this landscape of Christianity, a vibrant movement of believers is emerging. My wife and I, inspired by the “Jesus Revolution” of the 1970s, dedicated our lives to sharing the Gospel abroad for over four decades.

After returning to the United States a few years ago, we were thrilled to witness a new spiritual awakening, especially among young people. High school students are boldly proclaiming the Gospel, winning souls, and inspiring others to follow Christ. College campuses are becoming hubs of spiritual revival, where students gather to study the Bible, worship together, and share their faith openly. Even believers from many different denominations are gathering in large public places to praise, pray, and seek God.

Even within traditional churches, a remnant of devoted believers yearns for a deeper spiritual experience. A growing number of people, young and old, are saying, “We’re tired of materialism. We want more—we want God and we want to truly follow Jesus’ teachings.” Alongside this awakening in the West, we are also witnessing a significant spiritual movement in Muslim nations, where thousands are turning to Jesus and discovering the power of the Gospel.

This resurgence of spiritual fervor among students, church communities and even Moslem communities is a testimony to the enduring power of the Holy Spirit and God’s desire to call many to righteousness. As Daniel 12:3 says, “Those who turn many to righteousness” will shine like the stars forever

Our primary focus in missionary work while overseas was to empower new converts with the vision of discipleship and to inspire them to become full-time missionaries. We are committed to supporting and encouraging this new generation of devoted believers, equipping them to fulfill the Great Commission and transform the world for Christ.

Recognizing the need for guidance and spiritual nourishment, we created a discipleship handbook called *The Handbook for a Disciple of Jesus*. This practical guide equips believers with Word-based tools to understand the Gospel, grow spiritually, and share their faith effectively. To date, the

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handbook has been translated into more than 15 languages and distributed in a number of countries around the globe.

These inspiring developments have solidified our conviction to provide comprehensive resources that empower believers to embrace discipleship and live a life of purpose and impact. This book is the fruit of our deep desire to impart the true essence of discipleship to both new converts and seasoned Christians.

*Beyond The Pew: A Call to Authentic Discipleship* challenges the idea that Christianity is merely a religious affiliation or cultural identity. This book calls believers back to the radical, life-altering meaning of discipleship according to Jesus' teachings and example. Jesus did not call people merely to attend meetings about Him. He said, "Follow Me."

We will explore the stark contrast between a superficial, ritualistic approach to faith and a genuine, heart-centered pursuit of Christ. True Christianity is a departure from the worldly norm. It calls us to embrace a countercultural conduct marked by love, obedience, and service.

We will look at the revolutionary nature of Jesus' teachings, which transcend cultural and societal boundaries. We will explore the power of grace, which liberates us from sin, and the bold faith that empowers believers to overcome obstacles and testify openly about Christ. We will also emphasize the spiritual disciplines that keep a disciple strong: prayer, the Word of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, this book is a call to action. It is an invitation to engage in spiritual warfare, embrace the true meaning of discipleship, and live a life that honors God and blesses others. Through the testimonies of those who have gone before us, we learn that discipleship is a shared journey of learning, encouraging, and supporting one another.

This book is not merely a roadmap, but a compass for hearts yearning to grow closer to their Creator. It challenges all of us to embrace His disciplines and teachings as dynamic pathways to deepen our relationship with God and live out our faith with courage, clarity, and power.

May these pages inspire, challenge, and equip you to become the disciple Christ has called you to be.

As we walk through these chapters, do not read as a spectator. Read as someone being summoned. Let the Word confront what is passive, awaken

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what is asleep, strengthen what is weak, and call you into extraordinary potential provided in the inheritance of the born-again believer.

It is time to move beyond the pew.

It is time to follow Jesus.

# The Power Of One



Before we embark on this adventure of learning to disciple others according to the teachings of Jesus, we must first be willing to submit ourselves to the will of God and commit to becoming everything He wants us to be. You may not feel able, nor capable, but God does not choose us because we are able. But rather because He is able. All He needs is our will and determination to obey and follow Him.

I want to share with you a vision that the Lord gave me regarding the power of training disciples. I will use some simple mathematics to help you visualize the grandeur of what God could do with one man or woman who carries a vision to greatly impact the world through the power of discipleship.

Before going further, let us review the parable of the talents. Jesus told of a nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom and return. Before leaving, he entrusted responsibility to his servants. To one he gave ten talents, to the second five, and to the last, one. To each he gave according to their ability. He did not give any of them more than they could handle. He gave according to their ability and expected them to multiply what had been placed in their hands. The principle is clear: God gives responsibility with the expectation of fruitfulness, by picturing a master who entrusted his servants with varying degrees of responsibility, expecting them to multiply the talents entrusted to each one. This principle is equally applicable to discipleship. When we disciple others, we are multiplying the impact of Christ's Kingdom. One faithful disciple can become the seed of many more disciples. That is why the master said to the faithful servant, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities."

Before going further, we should notice that Jesus connects faithfulness now with greater responsibility later. Scripture teaches that believers will reign with Christ, and Jesus' parables show that stewardship in this life matters deeply. We are not called to bear fruit only for the present moment. Our faithfulness here prepares us for greater responsibility in the coming Kingdom. This means discipleship is not a small assignment. We are not

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called to only bear fruits here and now, but to greater responsibilities in the upcoming 1000-year reign of Christ on earth.

Now back to the vision I have called, “Give Me Five.” Consider the possibility of finding only FIVE people who want to serve Jesus with the same determination and passion. Then commit yourself to discipling those five people with the understanding that they, too, will become teachers who will each train and disciple

Now sit back and do the math. If you train five people, and each of those five trains five more, that results in 25 disciples. If those 25 each train five more, that becomes 125. If the process continues, the multiplication becomes astonishing. Once you have worked this mathematical equation down to the tenth level, you will be bringing to heaven with you roughly one million disciples, not even counting the many souls those disciples may lead to the Lord along the way. One person discipling five people. How powerful is that?

A comprehensive discipleship program, like the one outlined in *The Handbook for a Disciple of Jesus*, has now been developed into a full discipleship course, which can be found on my website: [faithwithoutborders.us](http://faithwithoutborders.us). This discipleship course can be completed in as little as three months, or at most five months, depending on how regularly you meet with the people you are discipling.

To carry the mathematical equation into a time frame, it would take at most five months multiplied by ten levels. That means that after a little over four years, one million disciples could be growing and discipling others. And if they continued from there, the number could grow to five million, then 25 million, and beyond. --All because YOU took the vision to heart to devote three to five months of your life to disciple five people. Now, give me FIVE!! The key lies in consistent, intentional discipleship.

This is the power of one seed. One seed has infinite power to create more and more seeds as it produces more fruit. This condensed timeline is possible because of the wealth of biblical resources available to us today.

You may ask, “How can it only take three to five months when Jesus took three and a half years with His own disciples?” The simple answer is that Jesus was drawing out the blueprint. We now have the Word, the miracles, the lessons, the teachings, and the testimonies made available to us through Scripture. We do not have to invent or reinvent the wheel. All we have to do is learn and follow.

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Once a firm foundation is laid, discipleship becomes an ongoing journey of following Christ closely. There will always be more to learn, but once someone commits to being discipled and the foundation is firmly established, the most important part of the building has been laid.

The process of discipling others doesn't require extensive time commitments or specialized training. Short, focused sessions, perhaps in a coffee shop or via video calls, can be highly effective. The most important requirement is a genuine desire to follow Christ and a willingness to share His love and truth with others.

Remember, the power to transform lives lies not in our abilities but in the Holy Spirit. As we yield to His leading and faithfully follow His commands, we can witness the incredible impact of one person, one disciple, and one transformative message transforming the world around us.

Yes, embracing the mission of discipling other believers requires commitment. We must first commit ourselves to be DOERS of the Word and not HEARERS only. In other words, if you don't use it, you lose it.

It is time to step out of our comfort zones and embrace the challenge of discipleship. By investing time, energy, and love into others, we can play a significant role in advancing the Kingdom of God.

An evangelist once challenged Dwight L. Moody, a former shoe salesman turned preacher, saying, "Dwight L. Moody, there is no limit to what God can do with a man who is yielded and willing to do His will." Moody's resolute reply was, "By the grace of God, I am determined to be that man." And indeed, he was.

Soon after, Moody moved to Chicago and began sharing his faith in Jesus Christ with others.

His passion for leading souls to the Lord grew, and he eventually left the shoe business to dedicate his life full-time to God's work. Moody became one of history's great evangelists, leading countless people to Christ and founding ministries that continue to impact lives today.

Imagine if Moody had not yielded to God's call. What a tremendous loss it would have been, not only for him, but also for the millions who benefited from his ministry. The same principle applies to each of us. If we are not open and submissive to God's will, we will never reach our full potential or accomplish all that God intends for us.

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You might argue, "I could never do anything great for the Lord like Moody did. I am not a charismatic evangelist or a gifted soul winner." But remember, Moody started as a humble farm boy with limited education, dreaming of wealth and success. It was only after encountering Jesus that he surrendered his life to God's purpose.

The Bible reminds us, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). This is the secret to the success of every person God has used mightily: They drew close to the Lord and relied solely on Him, His power, and His Word for guidance, strength, and inspiration. Despite our flaws and limitations, God can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine if we yield our lives to Him. The choice is ours: to seek God's Kingdom first (Matthew 6:33) or to pursue our own desires and plans.

Many Christians today seem more concerned with getting God to bless their own agendas than with embracing God's divine plan. We should all ask ourselves this question: "Am I willing to sign a blank sheet of paper and let God fill it in, without even knowing what His program is going to be?" This is the true test of surrender. If you are willing to become what God wants you to be, not merely what you want to be, He can use you mightily. You must surrender your life, mind, heart, and everything else to the Lord, letting Him transform you. When you truly yield to Him, God will step in and work through you. Just give Him a chance.

When you commit your all to the Lord, you can rest assured that your life is in His loving hands. To overcome the devil, submission to God's will is essential. "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). There is no limit to what God can do with a yielded and willing heart. However, as long as there are areas of your life that you refuse to surrender, the enemy can exploit them. God's Word warns us not to give the devil a foothold (Ephesians 4:27).

That is the power of one: one surrendered heart, one obedient disciple, one life fully yielded to Jesus, multiplied by the power of God.

# Jesus Took Love To A Whole New Level!



In a world marked by division, hatred, selfish ambition, and self-interest, Jesus introduced a radical concept: agape love. His divine love goes far beyond human affection. It is not weak sentiment, emotional attachment, or polite kindness. It is the very love of God poured into the heart of the believer. This love is the hallmark of true Christianity, a love beyond measure.

Jesus declared, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). This love is rooted in the very nature of God. It is not merely a feeling, but a choice, a commitment, and a spiritual law of the new creation. Unlike the conditional love of the world, agape love is unconditional. It seeks the good of others even at personal cost. It is patient, kind, forgiving, and unselfish. It does not envy, boast, or seek its own way.

The Apostle John beautifully captures the essence of agape love: "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Agape does not begin with human effort. It begins with God. His love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and that love empowers us to love others as Christ loved us. As Christians, we are called to reflect the love of Christ in both word and action. That means loving our enemies, forgiving those who have wronged us, extending compassion to all, putting the needs of others before our own, and building up rather than tearing down.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, describes the transformative power of agape love with unmatched clarity: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

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This divine love is the antidote to the world's problems. It can heal broken relationships, bridge divides, and bring peace to a troubled world. As we surrender our hearts to God's love, we are empowered to love others in a way that reflects the character of Christ.

Unlike natural human love, often described as *phileo*, *agape* love is divine in origin. Human love can be sincere, deep, and beautiful. A mother's devotion to her children can be profound, and a spouse's affection can be powerful. But without the unselfish *agape* love of God, human love remains limited. It can still become possessive, jealous, selfish, or conditional. *Agape* love lifts love beyond natural affection and fills it with the very nature of God.

Without the Lord's love, all love can turn to division and hate. The fall of man left the human heart bent toward self. Because of that, natural love often begins with affection but can end in control, offense, and self-protection; all mere shadows of love's true potential. Human love is the frail love that causes failures through selfishness and self-gratification; so powerful and yet so feeble and so limited because "self" is at the center of human love. *Agape* love is different because God is at the center. Human love can fail, but *agape* love is unshakable.

You cannot have *agape* love without God's divine nature. It cannot be manufactured, performed, or faked. It is the heart of God beating in a renewed, born-again heart. When the Apostle Paul described the Spirit-filled motivation that compels followers of Christ to share the Gospel and persuade others to surrender to Jesus, he explained in these few words, "For Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Jesus brought in a love that seeks not its own--A love that is tender, forbearing, long-suffering, kind and unselfish. -- It seeks the joy and welfare of others. --A love that mirrors the very nature of God. --A love that can't operate out of the natural heart, but from the re-created heart. *Agape* love elevates Christianity above religion.

As Christians, we are called to reflect the love of Christ in our words and actions. This means loving and blessing even those who spitefully use us, forgiving those who have wronged us, and extending compassion to all. It means putting the needs of others before our own and seeking to build up rather than tear down. It means that when people circle us out, we draw a larger circle and include them in love.

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Agape love is not merely a concept; it is a lifestyle. It is a love that compels us to sacrifice our own desires for the benefit of others. It is a love that empowers us to forgive even the most grievous offenses. It is a love that motivates us to serve those in need, without expecting recognition or reward.

Paul underscores the futility of all spiritual endeavors without this love. “Without agape love, all teaching, preaching, knowledge, revelation, prophecy, sacrifice, and spiritual activity amount to nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). And he goes on to say that that kind of love of God in us makes it possible for us to endure, remain humble, and prioritize others; to not envy and to not vaunt ourselves, nor operate in pride. To not be selfish, but to think of others' needs, to not behave unseemingly, to not seek our own, to not be dishonest or rude, to not be easily provoked, nor be so sensitive, to not be scandalous or gossiping and finally, to never rejoice in lies.

As we surrender our hearts to God's love, we are empowered to love others in a way that reflects the character of Christ. Therefore, we must strive to live a life characterized by agape love, demonstrating the transformative power of God's love to the world. Agape is the new law of the new creation. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34).

Agape love brings joy, beauty, peace, understanding, and compassion into a person's life. This is what Paul brought out to the Galatians, when he described the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22 to 23).

This divine agape love enabled Jesus, even on the cross, to utter: “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). It is Agape love that gives us the heart to pray for our enemies even while under persecution, without fear. Jesus did not allow His followers to remain at the level of natural love. He brought love into its Kingdom fullness when he corrected the old mosaic law said, “You have heard that it has been said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.’ But I say unto you, ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you’” (Matthew 5:43 to 44).

It is agape love that clothes bravery with humility and strength with gentleness. It is agape love that makes the strong bear the burdens of the

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weak, as Paul taught: “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves” (Romans 15:1).

It is agape love that causes a person to care for the poor, the uneducated, the overlooked, and the simple. The Word says, “Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessings of the Lord thy God which He has given thee” (Deuteronomy 16:17).

It is agape love that manifests Jesus amongst men. The command remains clear: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:39). When agape is visible, Christ becomes visible.

It is agape love that takes jealousy out of love, envy out of competition, anger out of conversation, and pride out of teaching.

It is agape love that brings unity in families, strengthening them for all that God has created them to be.

So let us not live within the limitations of human love. We've been empowered with a greater love as Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this than a man gives his life for his friends" (John 15:13). That is the standard of agape. It does not ask, “What can I get?” It asks, “How can I give?”

Let us rise above the limitations of human love. When we truly love others in this way, we become living examples of Christ's love. We become beacons of hope in a dark world, offering compassion, kindness, and understanding to those around us.

Let us not be content with a superficial understanding of love. Let us embrace the radical nature of agape love and allow it to transform our lives. As we do, we will not only experience greater joy and fulfillment but also make a significant impact on the world around us.

It is the love of the Holy Spirit that empowers us to love with God's love. The Word says, “God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). Let this divine love define us. Let agape become the evidence that Christ is truly alive in us.

# We're ALL Called To Lead



As born-again believers, we carry a message of hope, love, and salvation that can transform lives. This divine message, freely given, is the ultimate solution to humanity's deepest problems. It is a gift to be shared with the world.

If you were a salesman, you could not think of a better message to offer the world, and what is more, it is free. It's the best deal that we can ever offer anyone; literally, the “deal of a lifetime”, the message that unlocks a person's God-given potential, purpose, and destiny in Christ.

And to that effect, each one of us carries a way of expressing the Gospel. We must take this liberating message and present it in a winsome, truthful, and Spirit-led way so that many may come to Christ. We are each uniquely created, endowed with specific gifts and talents. Leadership is not first a position or a title; it is a calling to serve others. Jesus, the greatest leader, exemplified servant-leadership. He did not seek power or prestige, but rather sought to serve the needs of others.

Each one of us was created for leadership, but we must first learn to be leaders. When Jesus' disciples argued about who would be the greatest, Jesus corrected their thinking. Jesus said, "If you want to be great, find something to serve people with. The greatest amongst you serves what we all need." He taught them that true greatness is found in service. In the Kingdom, the greatest is not the one who demands to be served, but the one who gives himself to serve others.

Leadership is a seed with a tree trapped inside. If you are holding a seed, you are holding a tree in potential form. But that seed must go through a process. In the same way, the true value in each of us is the gift we were born to deliver to humanity. When that gift is developed and served with humility, your value makes you valuable and indispensable.

We all have a unique gift, and it is usually the one thing that we're passionate about. The enemy will work hard to keep you from developing that gift because, once you do, you become dangerous to him. When your gift

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is refined and surrendered to God, you begin to shine to your fullest potential and become most useful to the Kingdom of God.

The enemy often seeks to undermine our self-worth and potential. He whispers lies that lead to self-doubt, fear, and inaction. But we must resist those lies and embrace our true identity in Christ. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and we have been equipped by God to make a meaningful impact in the world.

To become effective leaders, we must cultivate a mindset of humility and service. We must be willing to learn, grow, adapt, step outside our comfort zones, and take risks. We do not need a position to truly come into our leadership role, but rather we need the right disposition. We do not need worldly power; we need to be empowered from within by God.

We need to fight the oppressive mindset that tries to demean our worth and our calling. Leadership begins privately before it becomes public. A person must first discover their gift through the eyes of God. Before we can lead others well, we must allow God to show us who we are and what He has placed inside us.

King David was overlooked by his own family. When Samuel came to anoint the next king, David's father did not even place him in the lineup. But God saw what others missed. Later, David would write, "For it was You who created my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I will praise You because I have been fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). David learned to see himself as God saw him. And that is the key right there.

Deep within the nature of a born-again believer is the spirit of initiative and influence. You were created with leadership on the inside, along with something special that God wants you to serve to the world.

True leadership is about influence, not control. It is about inspiring others to reach their full potential. At its heart, leadership comes down to love, the kind of love that seeks not its own, but the welfare of others. There is a difference between a boss and a true leader. A boss says, "Go and do this." But a true leader goes first and lead you into the unknown. They are initiators. --Not timid, not passive, but guides.

We must be willing to invest time and energy into developing others, just as Jesus invested in His disciples. We must embrace our God-given potential

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and step into our roles as leaders. By following Christ's example, we can make a lasting impact on the world, not by building followers around ourselves, but by helping others become strong in Christ.

We were created to deliver a gift to our generation. A tree exists to produce fruit. You do not walk up to a mango tree for the tree itself, but for the fruit it carries. In the same way, people will be drawn to the fruit God produces through your life. All you must do is develop your God-given gift and you will not need to chase influence. When your gift is refined and surrendered to God, it will serve others naturally.

So, pray that the Holy Spirit will show you your personal approach in presenting the Gospel to others. People will be reached through the fruit God produces in you. Find and refine your gift.

True leadership is born when your gift is discovered and served to the world. True leaders are not proud, seeking value, or chasing followers. They simply serve the gift God has given them. And people are drawn to the fruit. True leaders do not merely create followers; they create more leaders. It is the same with discipleship. Disciples make disciples, just as good teachers duplicate teachers.

One of the great freedoms in leadership is realizing that people are often drawn to the gift God placed in you. In the Kingdom of God, this makes perfect sense because all glory and credit belong to Him. If all leaders understood that it is their gift that makes them leaders, they would not be so much after the fame.

If you have not yet discovered your gift, know this: Jesus made you the light of the world. You have been made an ambassador. You are a representative of God's Kingdom, a bearer of the brightest light in the universe. Jesus saw leadership in Peter. Peter was a fisherman, but Jesus called him to become "a fisher of men." He called out his potential the day he met him.

We are all supposed to leave a legacy behind. We are supposed to leave an imprint on the world. That imprint is seen in our Gospel witness, our example, our lifestyle, our message, our teaching, and the fruit produced in the lives of the people we influence. Paul said, "If you want to know my gospel go to Corinth. What I have taught them has changed them, my gospel is imprinted in their lifestyle." 1 Corinthians 15:1)

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We are supposed to die empty, having poured out what God placed within us. Everything we have believed, learned, and lived should be passed on to others. That is why Jesus said that a grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die in order to bear much fruit. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit" (John 12:24). That is how the Apostle Paul lived. Near the end of his life, he could say that he had finished his course. "I am poured out. I have given all I had."

There is no room for ego in true Christianity. When you give your life to Jesus, you are crucified with Him (Galatians 2:20). The old self is no longer supposed to rule. You are a new man, raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Even Jesus said, "I only say what My Father says, and I only do what My Father does."

Your desire becomes simple and focused: you want to do His will. You do not have to worry about promoting yourself, showing off, or being noticed. Your only propelling force becomes the desire to obey the command of agape love and fulfill the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-19).

We are to die daily, but we can do that quietly. Paul says, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24). Our devotion to Him eradicates the old man. Our commitment to living what He says sets the pace of our new life. We live in victory. We live free. We carry such a light about ourselves that we shine, and the only thing that reflects from our being is the love of Christ.

We die daily, and we walk in His triumph. Our minds are renewed. Our hearts are settled. Our mission is clear. We are focused on His passion to love people, reach people, serve people, and lead them to Jesus. That is why we are all called to lead. Leadership is not about title, platform, or recognition. It is about influence surrendered to Christ and used for the good of others.

# The Gift Of Boldness



If you truly believe something, it will show in the way you live, speak, and carry yourself. Your belief becomes a conviction of the heart and you stand by it. Boldness in faith is the willingness to stand, speak, and obey even when it is uncomfortable, unpopular, or frightening. Boldness is not merely a quality; it is a divine endowment bestowed upon believers to enable them to live out their faith with courage and conviction. It is the courage to step out of our comfort zones, to face challenges head-on, and to proclaim the Gospel without fear or hesitation.

As followers of Christ, we are called to be bold witnesses. This means standing firm in our beliefs, even when faced with opposition or ridicule. It involves speaking the truth, challenging injustice, and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Throughout the Bible, we see numerous examples of individuals who exemplified boldness in their faith. They rose above fear, insecurity, and limitation, and they proved that when a person trusts God and steps out in faith, He can use us in remarkable ways.

David was the least likely candidate to face that fearsome Philistine warrior, Goliath. Yet, armed with only a sling and five smooth stones, David stepped onto the battlefield with unwavering confidence in God's ability to deliver victory (1 Samuel 17). His courage and faith in God's power served as a testament to the entire nation of Israel and ultimately led to Goliath's defeat.

Moses, an Israelite raised in the Egyptian palace, could have chosen a life of comfort and privilege. Instead, he answered God's call to confront Pharaoh and demand the release of God's people from slavery. Despite the risks and his own insecurities, Moses trusted God and boldly stood for the freedom of Israel (Exodus 3 to 14).

Jesus Himself is the ultimate example of boldness. He fearlessly challenged the religious leaders of His day, exposing hypocrisy and proclaiming the truth of God's Word. One striking example is the cleansing

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of the temple. In a courageous act of righteous zeal, Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and drove out those who were exploiting worshippers. He demonstrated His authority and proclaimed His deep love for God and His commitment to truth and justice. Jesus repeatedly confronted the hypocrisy of the Pharisees because He wanted to restore people to the true purpose of God's law. No wonder the Word compares the boldness of the righteous to that of a lion.

The Holy Spirit is the source of our boldness. He equips us with power to overcome fear, doubt, insecurity, and intimidation. As we yield to the Spirit's leading, we are empowered to speak God's Word with confidence and authority. Acts 4:31 says, "When they had prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness." The Holy Spirit filled the early church with courage, enabling them to proclaim the Gospel fearlessly, even in the face of persecution.

The life of a Christian should be faith lived out visibly. Your life shows the world who you belong to, who you stand with, and who you stand for. Many people will only believe the Bible when they see it bound in shoe leather, meaning when they see someone walking it out. They will believe the message when they see the message lived. Once your heart has been filled with the love of God, you will want to do for others what Christ has done for you.

The New Testament, particularly the Acts of the Apostles and the various Epistles, provides countless examples of the boldness that the Holy Spirit imparts on believers, empowering them to share their faith. Let us look at a few key passages.

In Acts 4:31, after praying, the place where the apostles gathered was shaken, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they were able to proclaim the Gospel fearlessly, even in the face of opposition and persecution. This shows us that the Holy Spirit equips believers with the courage to speak out about their faith, regardless of the circumstances.

Even when facing severe persecution, the apostles continued to preach the Gospel. In Acts 5:27 to 29, when they were ordered by the high priest to stop teaching in the name of Jesus, Peter and the other apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than men." This shows that Spirit-born boldness refuses to surrender obedience to human pressure.

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In Acts 1:8, Jesus told His disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses.” The Holy Spirit gives believers power not only to speak, but to live as witnesses in a world that often resists Christian truth.

In Romans 8:12-14, Paul writes about being led by the Spirit to live not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit actually empowers believers to boldly live out their faith, even when it means going against social norms.

The Apostle Paul’s life is a powerful testimony of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment. In Acts 28:30 to 31, even while under house arrest in Rome, Paul welcomed all who came to him and continued proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance.

The Holy Spirit imparts boldness to believers in many ways: boldness in speech, boldness under persecution, boldness in righteous living, boldness in prayer, boldness in witnessing, and boldness in sharing personal testimony. This boldness fuels the spread of the Gospel and enables believers to stand firm in faith amidst challenges.

Boldness in faith is inseparable from trust in God. When we truly believe that God has our best interests at heart, we are able to take risks, face challenges, and persevere through adversity, knowing that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5).

Faith is not acting blindly or recklessly. On the contrary, it is “confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith chooses to trust the unseen reality of God’s presence, power, and promises above circumstances or feelings that may suggest otherwise.

Boldness enables us to fulfill our God-given purpose, which includes sharing our faith. The more we step out in faith and take risks in standing for Christ, the more we experience the joy and fulfillment that come from living out our God-given mission. When Joshua was about to enter the Promised Land, God gave him this command: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

Paul told Timothy, “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). Fear, shame, and timidity

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must not be allowed to govern our obedience. God has worked out a plan through Jesus that allows us to come to Him with boldness. Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Here are a few more powerful verses on the importance of conviction and unashamed boldness:

### **Mark 8:38**

“Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

### **Ephesians 6:19 to 20**

“And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

### **Psalms 119:46**

“I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.”

### **Isaiah 40:9**

“Lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; proclaim to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’”

### **Isaiah 50:4**

“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary.”

### **Jeremiah 1:7**

“The Lord said to me, ‘Do not say, I am a youth, for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.’”

### **Luke 12:8**

“Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.”

### **Acts 4:13**

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“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled, and they realized that they had been with Jesus.”

### **Acts 18:9 to 10**

“Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.”

### **Romans 1:16**

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”

### **Titus 2:15**

“Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.”

# Revisiting Prayer



Imagine walking into a coffee shop to meet your best friend. Would you bow several times, change your voice, speak in old-fashioned religious language, and spend an hour listing everything wrong in your life? Of course not. Yet somehow, many believers have been trained to think that prayer must sound formal, dramatic, and distant. But Jesus warned us not to pray for performance. He said, “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others” (Matthew 6:5). Prayer was never meant to be a religious performance. It was meant to be communion with the Father.

Most of us have experienced that deflating feeling of our prayers seeming to hit an invisible ceiling. We have also fallen into what I call the “spiritual beggar” routine, – you know, that “please, please, PLEASE God!” approach where we desperate plead to God, only to end up feeling more discouraged than when we started. But here is the game-changing truth: we have been doing prayer all wrong. The Bible reminds us that “we are children of God” (1 John 3:1), not beggars at His door.

Think about this: In our day and age, we text our friends casually, DM without overthinking, and FaceTime spontaneously. Yet when it comes to God, we suddenly transform into 17th-century poets with a flair for drama. I recently watched someone switch from normal conversation to “Oh thou most gracious and heavenly Father” faster than a TikTok scroll. God must be thinking, “Who are you, and what happened to the real you I created?” After all, He invites us to “Come near to God and he will come near to you” (James 4:8).

Let me share a modern example. Sarah, a tech executive I know, approached prayer like her quarterly business reviews – formal, structured, and absolutely draining. She had a prayer closet (complete with LED mood lighting), a prayer journal that looked like a project management tool and even scheduled “prayer appointments” in her Google Calendar. One day, she broke down and admitted, “I’m doing everything right, but I feel nothing.” What was missing was not structure, but intimacy. She needed to understand

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that God desires “truth in the inward parts” (Psalm 51:6), not religious performance.

Prayer is not a formal presentation to the CEO of the Universe – it is a WhatsApp chat with your perfect Father. As Paul affirms, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15). That means prayer begins from sonship, not fear. It begins from relationship, not performance. It is not the cry of an outsider trying to be noticed. It is the voice of a child speaking to the Father who already loves him.

Consider these contrasts between "Religious Prayer" and intimate Relationship with the Father:

"Oh God, if it be thy will..."

"Dad, I need your help with this!"

45-minute problem description

"You know what's happening, Father. What should I do?"

"I'm so unworthy to approach thee..."

"Thank you for making me your child!"

Remember that viral video of a kid trying to get into their house, crying and begging outside, only to realize he had the key in his pocket the whole time? That is how many believers pray when they ask God to do what He has already given them authority to confront. Jesus said, “I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions” (Luke 10:19). There are times to ask, but there are also times to stand in the authority already given. Prayer must not become a substitute for obedience.

Think about it: If you gave your teenager a credit card for emergencies, but they stood outside the store begging for money, wouldn't you say, "Use what I've already given you!?" In the same way, God has given believers authority, access, and promises in Christ. That is why Scripture declares, “Let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

So let us revisit how we view prayer. God is not timing your visit, judging your vocabulary, or waiting for you to sound religious enough. As Paul

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instructs, we should "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), which means prayer is meant to become a continual conversation with the Father.

Drop in anytime (24/7 access)

Speak normally (no thee/thou required)

Be real (no religious mask needed)

Stay as long as you want (no minimum time requirement)

Come back as often as you like (no appointment needed)

To approach the Father intimately, we must drop the religious act. Jesus warned against "using vain repetitions as the heathen do" (Matthew 6:7). We do not need a special prayer voice. We do not need empty religious phrases. We need honesty, faith, and relationship. Be real before God. He already knows your heart.

Talk to God while driving. Share your thoughts with Him throughout the day. Bring Him into the ordinary moments of your life. The psalmist said, "Evening, morning, and noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice" (Psalm 55:17).

Include Him in your decisions like you would a best friend, for "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

Pray from victory, not for victory.

Stand in your position as a child of God, for "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). Express your feelings naturally, as David did throughout the Psalms.

Let conversations with God flow organically, for "the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us" (Romans 8:26).

God is not impressed by religious performance. He is moved by relationship. He's not looking for prayer warriors; there is a place and a time for that, but He is looking for sons and daughters who know they are loved and valued. As Scripture affirms, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1). It is time to revolutionize our prayer life. No more religious masks. No more spiritual begging. Just real, honest communion with a Father who loves us

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more than we can imagine. That is when prayer becomes less about performance and more about presence – less about duty and more about dialogue.

Your Father's waiting at the coffee shop. And trust me – He makes the best brew in the universe. Because He Brews. Ha!

# Prayer Through Intimacy



--A Declaration Of Dependence

Let's be real - we live in a world of instant everything. Next-day delivery, streaming on demand, answers at our fingertips. But God invites us into something deeper: a life where we learn to trust in things we can't see or touch. It is like having one foot in our fast-paced world and another in God's timeline, where faith helps us see beyond what is right in front of us.

Sometimes it feels like a balancing act, but that's exactly where the magic of prayer comes in - helping us bridge these two worlds in our everyday life. Ever notice how those first few moments after your alarm goes off can make or break your whole day? Yeah, me too. Sure, hitting snooze or grabbing your phone might seem like tiny choices, but they are actually setting up your spiritual GPS for the next 24 hours. And here is the thing – it is not just about having a good morning routine. It is about who or what gets your first "hello" when the sun peeks through your curtains. You know that heavy feeling you sometimes wake up with? When your to-do list feels like it weighs a ton? Most times, it is not actually because you have too much on your plate. It is more like your spiritual battery is running low.

That's why taking time to pray is not just another task to check off. It is more like plugging into your power source. Like any holy habit, it takes practice, discipline, and commitment, but trust me – it is worth setting that alarm to catch those very early hours. I often tell people, “I like to get up a few hours before the devil.”

We know that God has committed Himself to work through us, and we know that our prayers can do mighty things. But how? Jesus said, “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, remove from here to another place, and it shall remove and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matthew 17:20). Prayer joined with faith is not weak religious talk. It is partnership with God's authority and God's will.

Prayer is not merely an optional practice for good days. It is the bridge between our despair and God's grace, the lifeline of our soul. Without it, we

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may function physically, but our inner garden withers. Like the many who are chasing the American dream, we exist rather than truly live.

Prayer requires purpose and precision. Many of us scatter vague requests like seeds in the wind—asking for "blessings" without specificity, seeking "peace" without identifying the battlegrounds within. God is not a cosmic vending machine for generic wishes; He is a Father who invites us to bring specific requests to Him in faith, trust, and surrender.

We must never consider reduce prayer to a religious ritual; rather, it is a profound and personal connection with God. When we pray, we are engaging in an intimate conversation with the Creator of the universe. How cool is that?

Let's talk about what really makes prayer work - it's not about saying the perfect words or following some strict formula. It is about having that deep-down trust, kind of like knowing your best friend will come through for you even when you cannot see how yet. Think of it like planting a seed - you water it and care for it before you see any sprouts, right?

But here is the real talk - this trust thing works best when we are trying our best to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. Trust in God is not just a nice religious idea – it is as vital as breathing, as essential as your heartbeat. Think of it like this: when a child holds their parent's hand crossing a busy street, they are not analyzing traffic patterns or calculating risks – they are simply holding on, fully confident that their parent will keep them safe. That is what trusting God looks like. It is that deep-down knowing that even when life feels like a storm-tossed sea, you're anchored to something - Someone - bigger than your circumstances.

But here is what makes divine trust different from every other kind: God's track record is perfect. Human relationships can leave us wounded, disappointed, and hesitant to trust. But God's faithfulness never wavers. When we truly grasp this, not just in our heads but in our hearts, it changes everything. Our worries about tomorrow begin to lose their grip. Our need to control everything loosens. We find ourselves standing on solid ground even when everything else feels shaky. That is not blind faith. It is tested, proven trust in the One who holds all things together.

Some prayers find immediate response. Others take decades to unfold. But waiting is not divine negligence. Often, it is preparation. While we focus on external changes, God often works first on transforming us internally. In

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silence, He purifies our motives and deepens our dependence. Those moments of silence test our faith severely, but they also reveal something profound: prayer is not primarily about getting answers. It is about defining and refining our relationship with the Father. God desires us more than He desires to give us things.

The Word says, “You shall seek Me and find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). This means God wants our full attention and devotion when we come to Him. Jesus often sought solitude to commune with His Father (Mark 1:35). His prayers were marked by intimacy, and because of His close relationship with the Father, He prayed confidently as God’s beloved Son. We, too, are children of God, and we have been granted the privilege of approaching the throne of grace with intimacy and confidence (Hebrews 4:16).

Prayer connects us to God’s eternal purpose. When we pray, we step into a divine story larger than ourselves. In His presence, we behold His grace, mercy, and unconditional love. And as we behold Him, we learn to reflect His character and carry His presence to others.

A heart filled with gratitude is pleasing to the Father. When we focus on God’s blessings, our faith is stretched to see beyond impossibilities, and our prayers become more confident. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6).

To maintain a consistent prayer life, we must cultivate the habit of constant communion with God. This includes setting aside time for earnest, dedicated prayer, just as Jesus consecrated the early hours of the morning to commune with His Father. But it also means learning to pray continually, as Paul taught in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, whether we are working, driving, or simply going about our daily routines.

Whenever Linda and I travel in two different vehicles, we often follow each other and keep a phone call open. We do not always talk, but every now and then one of us says something, we chat for a bit, and then we continue in quiet connection until the next exchange. It is the same with the Lord. We can keep the conversation going all the time. We can praise Him for making us righteous, adopting us as sons of the Most High, giving us His authority and power, and surrounding us with His love.

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What if, before expecting God to change our circumstances, we first allowed Him to change our thinking and align it with His Word? We might pray with less fretting and more confidence. Proverbs 4:23 teaches us to guard the heart because everything we do flows from it. That means disciplining the mind is not optional. We must train our thoughts to agree with God's truth.

Like a farmer who plants in faith, we must understand that the harvest of our prayers follows divine timing. The process may be invisible, but growth is taking place beneath the surface. During waiting periods, fears and doubts may whisper, "Did God hear?" But those moments forge authentic faith.

Prayer reaches further than mere problem-solving. It is also about the transformation of our character. In God's presence, our priorities are aligned, our identity is defined, and our perspective broadens. We learn to trust not only in what God does, but in who He is. When we fix our eyes on His greatness and infinite love, prayer shifts from burden to blessing, from perspiration to inspiration. The circumstances may not change immediately, but our hearts find rest in knowing we are held by a perfect Father who is both willing and able, sovereign and good.

Ever since overcoming bitterness, I have trained myself to think only on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, just as Philippians 4:8 teaches. And it really works. Living in praise and thankfulness makes praying in praise effortless.

In your darkest valleys, remember: prayer is not only spiritual warfare. It is also a place of profound peace. It is where we find rest for our souls and renewal for our spirits. Let each prayer be more than a list of anxious requests. Let it become a transformative encounter with the living God.

Make your morning time more than a ritual discipline. Let it become a genuine declaration of dependence. Every time we lift our hearts to God, whether in spoken words or silent cries, we proclaim to the spiritual realm, "I trust not in my strength, but in the Lord's grace." This humble dependence draws submissive obedience, and it moves the Father's heart. Psalm 51:17 reminds us that God does not despise a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

You do not always need to beg for what the Father has already promised. When you know that He desires to supply your needs and give you the Kingdom, prayer begins to shift from anxious pleading to thankful confidence. When you realize that God has given us authority to move

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mountains on earth, and that He has promised to supply all our needs, there is less room for begging and much more room for praise, thanksgiving, and bold fellowship. Why not approach Him as a child of the King?

Praying through praising takes the exertion out of prayer and it keeps you in an attitude of magnifying the Lord at all times. If only we could fully understand what it means that “He gives grace to the humble.” He has given us the right to live a gracious life, a victorious life, an abundant life, with His wind filling our sails day by day.

Prayer initiates a profound transformation that touches our entire being. You cannot be a person of prayer without being shaped by it. In the quiet moments of communion, God teaches us three essential lessons:

- To listen with patience
- To wait with faith
- To obey with conviction

While we often cry out for external changes, God orchestrates an internal revolution. He gently aligns our desires with the priorities of His kingdom. Perhaps this is where hesitation creeps in—we recognize that authentic prayer demands surrender. Many prefer the safety of superficial petitions, but God seeks the whole heart. Prayer bridges the gap between where we are and the place of complete surrender.

Jesus also taught that the Holy Spirit is here to help us pray. In our finite minds, we do not always know what to pray for or how to approach the concerns we are facing. That is why praying in the Spirit is so beneficial. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26 to 27).

By practicing these principles in communion with the Father, we can experience the transforming power of prayer. We can overcome challenges, receive divine guidance, and live a life that glorifies God.

The critical question is not whether God will answer—He will. The deeper question is this: are you willing to be shaped by the waiting, the dependence, and the silence? True prayer guides us toward God’s heart and away from self-centeredness.

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Those who pray deeply discover a unique inner joy—not from immediate answers, but from intimate communion with the Creator. It is the joy of witnessing heaven touching earth through a persistent encounter with the divine, and the fulfillment of participating in God's eternal work despite our human weakness.

Remember this truth: No sincere prayer is wasted. Each word spoken before God carries power. He not only hears, but acts, moving heaven and earth in response to His children's prayers. Every prayer plants a seed in Kingdom soil.

Prayer doesn't end with "Amen"—it manifests itself in ongoing action. Prayers for holiness should be reflected in holy living. Prayers for forgiveness should flow into forgiving others. Prayers for God's Kingdom should shine through our daily witness.

When we finally stand before God's throne, we will understand that every tear, every word, and every moment of faith bore fruit beyond our imagination. Until then, let us pray with boldness and assurance, persistent in the unwavering certainty that the God who began His good work in us will faithfully complete it.

Prayer is both a privilege and a powerful tool. Let us embrace it with faith, boldness, and gratitude.

# Pray **BOLD** Prayers



“Let us then approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Imagine standing before the most powerful throne in existence—not with trembling knees or downcast eyes, but with unwavering confidence. This is exactly what God invites us to do. He has not merely granted us the privilege of prayer. He has opened the way into His throne room and invited us to enter with bold assurance. This revelation of bold prayer transforms the way we understand our relationship with the Almighty.

The mandate for bold prayer is not a modern innovation—it is woven throughout the fabric of Scripture. Consider David, who dared to pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts" (Psalm 139:23). Such audacious intimacy with God showcases the kind of relationship He desires with His children. Nehemiah, driven by an unshakeable vision to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, approached God's throne with remarkable boldness (Nehemiah 1:5-11). Moses stood in the gap for Israel, interceding with holy boldness, and God responded to his intercession (Exodus 32:11 to 14). Even Abraham boldly negotiated with God over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:23-33).

The New Testament elevates this boldness to unprecedented heights. Through Jesus, we have been granted an access that the Old Testament saints could only dream of. As John declares, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1 John 5:14). We have Jesus, our perfect High Priest, who "was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He stands as our divine advocate, our celestial attorney, presenting our cases before the Father with His own blood as evidence of our redemption.

“Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess” (Hebrews 4:14) is not merely a suggestion. It is the foundation of our bold approach. This confidence flows from our new identity in Christ and our position of rest in His finished work. Hebrews 4:10 says, “For whoever enters God’s rest also rests from his own

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work, just as God did from His.” This rest is not passivity. It is the active position of trust in Christ’s completed work on our behalf.

The living power of God’s Word amplifies our bold prayers: "For the Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any double-edged sword, it pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). When we pray Scripture, we are wielding heaven's authorized language.

Consider these three unshakeable pillars that establish our right to bold prayer:

1. Our High Priest is Jesus Christ. Hebrews 4:14 says, “Therefore, since we have a great High Priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.” His intercession never ceases, and His advocacy never fails. His perfect sacrifice has opened the way to the Father. Hebrews 4:15 reminds us that we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin. He is the reason we can pray boldly. We do not come in our own merit. We come in the merit of His finished work.

2. Our Position of Rest: We have entered God’s Sabbath rest through faith in Christ. "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). This rest is not merely physical relaxation. It is confident trust in God’s finished work. Hebrews 4:10 says, “For whoever enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His.” When the promise of God is mixed with faith in the heart, striving gives way to confidence.

3. The Living Word: Scripture is not merely ancient text. It is “God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). When we pray God’s Word, we are speaking His language back to Him. The Word of God becomes our prayer arsenal. Isaiah proclaimed, “So is My Word that goes out from My mouth: it will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). When we bring Scripture into prayer, we are not merely reciting ancient texts. We are agreeing with the living Word of God. Jesus Himself modeled this when He quoted Scripture during spiritual warfare in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1 to 11).

Praying God’s Word back to Him is not manipulation. It is agreement. It is strategic and powerful because we are building our requests on the

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unshakable foundation of God's own promises. Proverbs 18:10 says, "The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." God has exalted His Word above His own name. God will never break His Word. His promises reveal the integrity of His name. That is why coming into His presence with His Word is most pleasing: it manifests trust and dependence on what He has promised. Peter also reminds us that "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life" through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness (2 Peter 1:3).

Let us therefore seize this divine invitation to bold prayer. Let us approach God's throne, not as beggars hoping for crumbs, but as beloved children of the King, confident in the Father's love. "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1). Through faith, let us lay hold of every promise in God's Word, knowing that "no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Prayer is not just a religious exercise—it is our royal privilege, our spiritual birthright, and our mighty weapon in spiritual warfare. As we pray with boldness, backed by Scripture and covered by Christ's blood, we participate in heaven's activity on earth. "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). This is the extraordinary power of a bold, Scripture-saturated prayer.

# Jesus Comes FIRST



“Christ is not valued unless He is valued above all” (St. Augustine).

In our pursuit of Christian service, it is easy to become so engrossed in the tasks at hand that we neglect the One who empowers us. Jesus Himself cautioned against this, reminding us that a balanced life, rooted in a deep relationship with Him, is essential.

The Word gives repeated warnings about becoming entangled with the “cares of this life.” Even in God’s service, we can become so busy doing good things that we neglect the most important things: the Word, prayer, worship, and listening to Jesus.

God values the service we offer Him, and He chooses to work through His people. But He wants more than our activity. He wants our attention, adoration, and intimate fellowship. Jesus said, “These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23). In other words, we must not use one act of obedience as an excuse to neglect another. Service is important, but intimacy with Jesus must remain first.

Although our service of witnessing and winning others to Jesus is very important, the time we spend alone with Him is even more important. When we take that time alone with Him, we will find that surprisingly we have ample time for all the other things we need to do, and we are able to get them done even faster in a shorter amount of time.

There is a story about Martin Luther and his coworker Philip Melancthon. They had a particularly strenuous and busy day ahead of them, and Melancthon suggested that they cut their usual morning prayer time in half. Luther refused. Instead, he insisted that because they had so much to do, they would need to spend not two hours, but four hours in the presence of the Lord.-- That is convicting, but it is also true. When we realize what we receive by spending time with Him, and that every good gift comes from the Father, and that He’s really the One blessing our every we begin to understand how foolish it is to rely on self-effort.

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This reminds me of the story of the bedroom slippers. A little girl knew her father's birthday was coming, and because she had learned to knit, she began spending time every evening in her room making bedroom slippers for him. Weeks went by, then months. Finally, his birthday came, and she gave him the slippers she had worked so hard to make.

When her father opened the gift, he was deeply touched. But then he sat the little girl on his knee and said, "My, those are beautiful, and God knows I needed them, but I have missed our time together every evening so much! It's as though I haven't seen you for a number of months, and while I'm so thankful for the slippers, I would much rather have you."

While serving God is noble and fulfilling, it is crucial to remember that our ultimate purpose is to know Him more intimately. As we delve deeper into His Word and spend quality time in prayer, we are better equipped to serve Him effectively. Jesus' interaction with Martha and Mary offers a poignant lesson. Martha, though diligent in her service, missed the opportunity to sit at Jesus' feet and learn from Him. Jesus gently corrected her, emphasizing the importance of spiritual nourishment over physical labor (Luke 10:39-42).

Intimacy with Christ is the source of our strength, wisdom, and guidance. When we prioritize time with Him, we are filled with His love, peace, and power. This enables us to approach life's challenges with confidence and boldness. David, a man after God's own heart, understood the importance of intimacy with God. He often sought solitude to commune with the Lord, and it was during these times that he received divine inspiration and guidance.

The Bible is God's Word, a powerful tool for spiritual nourishment and growth as well as for transformation. By immersing ourselves in God's Word, we are nourished spiritually and equipped to live a victorious life. The Bible provides us with absolute truth, guiding us in every aspect of our lives.

So to neglect our fellowship with the King of kings can be disastrous to our spiritual life and walk with the Lord! God will not take second place, even to His service! "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). Believe it or not, if you put anything else before the Lord, it has become your god!

Giving Jesus first place means putting His Word first in our lives! Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). God's Word is food for our soul, and it is absolutely essential to

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our spiritual growth! If we do not take time to feast on Jesus' Word, our souls will become weak. We may continue moving, working, and serving, but inwardly we will become spiritually malnourished. Even our service to God can become powerless and fruitless when it is not sustained by His presence. We cannot do the Master's work without the Master's power and direction.

How many times have we rushed into the day, not only in our work but even in our thoughts? Instead of bringing our concerns to the Lord, we begin worrying, planning, and carrying the burden ourselves without even stopping to ask God. Then we wonder why things do not go right.

When you first wake up, get your orders from Him for the day. Otherwise, you are like a soldier trying to fight a war on his own without listening to headquarters and without receiving direction from his Commander-in-Chief. Our heavenly Commander, Jesus, can solve many problems before the day even begins if we put Him first, pray, and listen to what He says through His Word!

Without a good daily dose of the Word and prayer, you will walk around feeble, stumbling about in your own wisdom and strength. Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). But the Bible also says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). That strength comes through putting Jesus first, through prayer, and through the reading of God's Word.

So let us give Jesus and His Word first place. If we do not, our whole life will be thrown out of balance, and the result will be disharmony, disruption, and confusion. There's, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past!--only what's done for Christ will last!" Let Jesus be your first love and always keep Him in that place! You will never lose by seeking first the Kingdom!

Before sharing powerful scriptures on "First Place", I want to share a poem written by an evangelist who had a daily radio devotional in the 50's, Virginia Brandt Berg, which has always touched me deeply.

*First Place*  
*I was longing to serve the Master,*  
*But alas, I was laid aside*  
*From the busy field of workers*  
*In the harvest field so wide.*  
*They were few, yes, few in number,*

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*And I could not understand  
Why I should be left inactive;  
It was not as I had planned.  
I was longing to serve the Master,  
And the need indeed was great.  
For me it was easy to labor,  
But oh, it was hard to wait,  
To lie quite still and be silent,  
While the song was borne to my ear,  
From the busy field of workers,  
In the harvest field so dear!  
I was longing to serve, just to serve the Master,  
But He led to a desert place,  
And there as we stopped and rested,  
His eyes looked down in my face.  
So full of tender reproaching,  
They filled me with sad surprise!  
Did He think I had grudged my service,  
Or counted it sacrifice?  
“Oh, Master, I long to serve, just to serve Thee!  
There are so few at the best.  
Let me off to the fields,” I pleaded.  
“I care not to stay and rest!”  
I knelt at His feet imploring,  
I gazed in His face above.  
“My child,” He said, “don’t you know  
Your service is nothing without your love?”  
I was longing to serve, to serve my Master,  
Oh, this was my one fond thought.  
For this I was ever pleading,  
As His footstool in prayer I sought.  
But there in that lonely desert,  
Apart from the busy scene,  
It dawned on me slowly and clearly  
Where my great mistake had been.  
My mind was so full of service, just service,*

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*I had drifted from Him apart.  
And He longed for that sweet communion,  
The union of heart with heart!  
Well, I sought and I found forgiveness,  
While mine eyes with pain were dim.  
And now, though His work is still precious,  
The first place is kept for Him!*  
--Virginia Brandt Berg (1885-1968)

Below are some beautiful verses on the importance of our first love.

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### **Matthew 10:37 to 39**

“Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

### **John 15:5**

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

### **Proverbs 3:1 to 6**

“My son, do not forget My teaching, but let your heart keep My commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

### **Psalms 1:1 to 6**

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.”

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# It's Free, But There's A Price To Pay



As Christians, born again and filled with the Holy Spirit, we now belong wholly to Jesus. First John 4:13 says, “And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.” This is no small thing. We are not merely improved versions of our old selves. We are new creatures, living under a different Kingdom, bearing a different passport, no longer slaves, but sons and victors. The Word says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In my book, “The Butterfly Wonder”, I explain how I am convinced that God has purposely created the butterfly coming out of an earthbound cocoon from the transformation of a caterpillar, to illustrate the metamorphosis that takes place in the new believer once he is born again.

We now walk in this new identity, reconciled back into intimate relationship with God through the ransom Christ paid in full. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:8).

We are a royal priesthood, now invited to live in the inheritance of Christ: His righteousness, His authority, His Spirit, and His Kingdom assignment. Peter said, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). We exercise His authority on earth to destroy the works of the devil and to enforce the will of the Father on earth as it is in heaven (Luke 10:19).

The life of a disciple of Jesus requires commitment and dedication. We cannot remain observers in the curious crowd. There came a moment when many disciples left Jesus after He had preached to them a very controversial message. He turned to those who remained and said, “Does this offend you?” Then He explained, “It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing:

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the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life” (John 6:61 to 63).

Jesus was letting them know that following Him would include hard sayings, costly obedience, and moments when the flesh would not understand. But the Spirit of God would give them strength to meet the demands of discipleship. He would not be asking anything of the disciples that was not asked of Him by the Father. In fact, He said, “Verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do, this also does the Son likewise” (John 5:19). He was imitating the Father!

As born-again believers, we have been called to a higher purpose, a divine destiny. Jesus has commanded us to follow Him and to be imitators of Him as He was of God. Jesus told the disciples, “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). Apostle Peter said, “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2: 21). That is the true meaning of discipleship. We are to follow Jesus by doing what He has done.

Being a disciple means not just learning but putting into practice what we learn. You can study scripture extensively, but without action, the transformational power of the Gospel remains untapped. A new believer, filled with the Holy Spirit and actively living the Word, embodies more of the Gospel’s power than a passive theologian who is not moved by the Spirit of God, but is only a reader and a hearer.

In order to embrace discipleship, we must apply His teachings in our life, not only in theory but in being obedient doers of the Word! Through the power of the Word with the guidance and the help of the Holy Spirit, witnessing will become second nature to you, or rather the primary nature of the new man!

Witnessing is not a mere task; it is divine empowerment. Jesus promised, “But you shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto Me...unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). We must practice walking out our faith with conviction, showing the world the transformative love and power of Christ. You cannot separate knowing and doing. That is not faith.

Let us take an example from officers of the law. They carry a certain authority about them. You can often recognize them even when they are not

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in uniform, because authority has shaped the way they carry themselves. They do not stop representing the law simply because they are off duty. In the same way, as sons of God, we carry an assignment wherever we go. We are always on the lookout to stop the works of the devil. We look for people who need healing, people who need help, people who need encouragement, people who need prayer, and people who need to hear the Gospel, plain and simple.

When we walk in the authority of the Holy Spirit, we talk differently, walk differently, think differently, and act differently. Because faith expects things to go its way. If anything, faith is surprised if things do not go God's way. You expect circumstances to respond to the authority of Christ, the same way a police officer expects the law to be respected. That is the "anointing" that God gives us when we are born again and embrace the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "But you shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8).

Faith, authority, and dominion should work together seamlessly. This happens when we put our faith into action. There must be application of what we hear and learn from the Word. Otherwise, we only have knowledge, and knowledge without obedience does not produce fruit.

There is a simple way to read and absorb God's Word: read it with a heart already committed to obey. That is what the fear of the Lord is. It is reverence and honor for God and His Word, as though you were sitting in class with a master. You would not think of taking a three-month course with the best gymnast or basketball player in the world just to gather information. You would take the course with the intention of learning, applying, practicing, and doing what he teaches.

That is what Jesus meant when He said that the man who hears His sayings and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand (Matthew 7:24 to 27). Hearing without doing is not discipleship. It is self-deception dressed in Bible knowledge.

What would we think of a policeman standing on a street corner, watching a shop being robbed, and doing nothing about it? We would immediately question his commitment to the authority he represents. In the same way, the world looks at Christians and wonders why the authority we claim in Christ is not more visible in our lives. Authority is not given for decoration. Authority is given for action.

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Walking by faith is more than having faith for one thing. Again, a policeman is not appointed to only stop bank robberies. He is appointed to stop all evil doing. In our case, we are not only appointed to stop the works of the devil, but to also demonstrate the goodness of God, both!

Did you ever notice that when Paul enumerated the fruit of the Spirit, the word "fruit" is singular; meaning that it is one fruit that encompasses all these. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5: 22-23). When we walk in the Spirit, we walk in all these. The same as a police officer is equipped with all sorts of tools and weapons in order to stop evil doing. We are on the lookout to do all manner of goodness for the Kingdom of God. There are no laws against any of these. All of these comprise the uniform of a doer of God's Word. The Spirit of God in you empowers you with all of these. They all work seamlessly in us and through us. We love, we watch, we pray, we are a light, we do it all, and we are always on duty!

Following are some scriptures to help us all put our faith into action. There are a number of disciplines involved in order to activate the disciple in us.

LOVE! "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34).

DENY! "Whoever he is of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).

WITNESS! "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom" (Matthew 9:35).

SHINE! "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

HEAL! "He gave them power to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matthew 10:1).

DELIVER! "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out devils" (Mark 16:17)

# It's Time For Christians To come Out Of The Closet



It is time to emerge from the shadows and step into the light. As Christians, we are called to be beacons of hope in a world shrouded in darkness. We are not mere spectators; we are active participants.

It is time for each one of us to be known by our love and our concern wherever we go and to be part of the solution by speaking the truth that we know. Jesus said so: "You are the light of the world, and you can't hide your light under a bushel" (Matthew 5:14-16). Paul told Timothy, "God has not given us a spirit of fear (timidity), but of power and love and sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). And Paul explained to the Corinthians, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Corinthians 2:4,5).

Jesus Himself was the ultimate example of bold proclamation. He fearlessly confronted the religious leaders of His day, exposed hypocrisy, and spoke the truth without compromise. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead, demonstrating the power of the Kingdom of God.

Our Gospel is powerful because it carries truth against all the lies around us. It carries light against the darkness of this world. It carries authority against the works of the devil. It carries healing through the laying on of hands by believers of anyone who need it. Jesus said, "These signs shall follow them that believe." This is the Gospel in demonstration, not words only.

This is part of the full Gospel, and this is part of the price of discipleship. We preach the Kingdom of God here and now, before the eyes of men. We do not merely talk about it. We demonstrate it. We set captives free of their sickness, their demons, and we tell them the fantastic truth of redemption. -- That Jesus paid their ransom. They are free as soon as they receive the Good News.

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We know too much to remain silent. We carry a flame of truth that can light many candles. Freely we have received; freely we must give. Jesus warned us, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26). So this is not merely a personal preference. It is a responsibility to a commandment.

The first responsibility of a disciple is to deny himself so he can live for love. Jesus explained this principle when He said, “Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). Fruitfulness begins where self-rule ends.

If we are faithful to abide in the Word, we are bound to bear fruit. Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and I in you, you will bear much fruit” (John 15:5). It is His seed that bears fruit in us. Jesus also said, “The Kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground” (Mark 4:26). The Kingdom grows where the seed of the Word is sown, received, and obeyed.

So it is time for us to come out of hiding and live out our Christian faith openly. Not merely to expect blessings for ourselves, but to sow seeds so that many others can find the truth, just as we have.

The Gospel we carry is not just a message, it is a transformative force. It is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). It is the light that dispels the darkness, the truth that sets people free. We are called to share this message with boldness and conviction, regardless of the cost. Decide NOW to be a witness for Jesus.

# If The Salt Has Lost Its Savor



--When Christians Lose Their Spark:

Ever taken a bite into a meal that is completely bland? It is disappointing, right? That is exactly what Jesus was getting at when He delivered one of His most striking metaphors: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot" (Matthew 5:13).

Let us sit with that for a minute. Jesus was not giving a cooking lesson. He was revealing what happens when God's people lose their effectiveness. The message is crystal clear: if we've lost our spiritual fire, our sense of purpose, our ability to make a difference... we have missed the whole point of being followers of Christ.

Think about salt in ancient times. Before we had fridges humming in our kitchens, salt was not just for taste – it was literally a lifesaver. People used it to keep food from spoiling. In the same way, Christians are meant to be spiritual preservatives in a world prone to decay. We're called to spread God's truth like salt spreads through food, preventing the rot of godlessness, moral decay, and chaos.

But here is where it gets even more interesting. When you add salt to food, it does not just season it temporarily – it transforms it permanently. That is what we are supposed to do in our communities and culture. We are not called to be secret Christians or Sunday-only believers. We are meant to be living, breathing examples of Christ's transformative power.

Jesus explained this beautifully in John 15:4 to 5: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me." It is a simple but profound truth: we cannot make a lasting difference if we are disconnected from our Source.

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This teaching is not hidden in some obscure corner of Scripture. Jesus dropped this salt metaphor right in the middle of the Beatitudes – basically the greatest sermon ever preached. He was painting a picture of what authentic Christianity looks like: being poor in spirit, living in genuine repentance, walking in meekness, hungering for righteousness, showing mercy. When we stop living these values, we become like the salt that has lost its flavor or a light hidden under a table –useless for our intended purpose.

Jesus made this even clearer in John 8:31: “If you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.” The message is unmistakable. Our effectiveness as Christians is not measured merely by church attendance, Christian language, or wearing a cross necklace. It is about living out our faith in real, tangible ways that impact the world around us.

This is what I call the real price of non-discipleship: becoming tasteless salt in a world desperately needing flavor, truth, and preservation. When we lose our distinct Christlike character, we are not just letting ourselves down. We are failing to fulfill our divine purpose in the world.

The way that we are supposed to make a difference in our communities is clearly shown in Matthew 25:35-36, where Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me". In other words, wherever we see a need, we care enough to do something about it. This is part of loving our neighbor as ourselves and doing unto others what we would want done unto us.

# You've Got The Power



Before Jesus began His public ministry, He was baptized by John the Baptist, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. Matthew records it this way: “And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him” (Matthew 3:16). Before Jesus stepped into the fullness of His public assignment, the Spirit of God came upon Him.

So at the onset of Jesus' ministry, before He did anything, He had to receive the Holy Spirit from the Father. Then, when His earthly ministry was finished and He was preparing to leave His disciples, He promised to send them the same Holy Spirit that had been given to Him, to live in them so that they could do the same works as He did. Jesus said, “He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father.” He also said, “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth... for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:12, 16 to 18). Jesus was showing them that the same presence and power they had witnessed in Him would soon dwell in them through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live a life of faith and boldness. He equips us with the spiritual gifts and abilities we need to fulfill God's purpose for our lives. As we yield to the Spirit's guidance, we are transformed into bold witnesses for Christ.

With the Holy Spirit living in us, we are equipped to live as Jesus did. This divine presence is the catalyst for transformation and action. It is the Holy Spirit in us that makes it possible! This is the very reason why the Holy Spirit of God was given to us! Conversely, if you do not plan to follow Christ and obey His commands and manifest the Kingdom of God in order to destroy the works of the devil, you do not really need the Holy Spirit.

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The Holy Spirit was given so believers could manifest the power of the Kingdom. Jesus specifically told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father. He said, "Wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:4 to 5). Then He added, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8).

Jesus said that ALL believers could receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit by simply asking the Father to give Him to them. He said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke 11:13).

Now, consider this: you not only have the power that the Holy Spirit gives you, to live as Jesus did, manifesting the Kingdom of God, but the Holy Spirit also gives you all of the gifts as well: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22). So the Spirit does not only empower what we do. He transforms who we are.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit could not come into the prophets, but rather He came upon them to cause them to say or do what God was speaking. That is why they would say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." However, in the New Testament, the fullness of the Spirit of God was in Jesus, in full measure. The Holy Spirit operated fully in and through Jesus. John said, "For He whom God has sent utters the Words of God, for He gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand."

To further confirm this, when Jesus began His ministry after His 40 days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness, He stood in the temple and read from the prophecy in Isaiah which was about Himself: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and to comfort all that mourn" (Isaiah 61:1 and 2). Jesus fulfilled this perfectly, and then He sent us the Holy Spirit so that we could continue His work on earth. The Holy Spirit is the One who does the works of Jesus through us.

Let us revisit what Jesus told His disciples: "These signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new

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tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17 to 18).

In the original Greek, the word for power is the ‘*dunamis*’ of God, meaning the ‘power of enablement’. The power to do it. --To go out and be the witnesses, the proof. It's the demonstration that matters. Jesus, when answering the Pharisees who were constantly questioning His identity and authority, said, “If I do not the works of My Father, believe me not. But, if I do, though you believe not Me, believe the works; that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him” (John 10:37, 38). In other words, the works proved the message. Jesus also said, “If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God is come upon you” (Luke 11:20).

While Jesus was still here on earth, He trained His disciples in the Holy Spirit working through them. Luke expresses very clearly the anointing they were given to work the works of Jesus when he said, “Then He called His twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1, 2). Matthew also cites the same commission that was given to them all. Jesus commanded them: "And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:7, 8).

Luke records another occasion where Jesus sent out 70 disciples with the same authority. “The Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, wherever He Himself would come. He said to them, ‘The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray, all of you, the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. Heal the sick, and say unto them, ‘The Kingdom of God is come’” (Luke 10). These 70 returned and said, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name.” They were given God’s power, the Holy Spirit, the same power that Jesus had. He is the power to manifest and demonstrate the signs and wonders of the Kingdom of God.

Again, according to Mark 16, he who is baptized by the Holy Spirit, will be able to demonstrate the Kingdom of God. This means that there must be not only preaching but demonstration to accompany the truth of the Gospel. The signs and wonders demonstrate the Kingdom of God on earth, as it is in

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heaven. Jesus talked about the works of God. He said, "The works that I do, you will do also, and greater works will you do because I go to My Father" (John 14:12).

Before Jesus left and returned to the Father, He spoke to His disciples about the ministry He had fulfilled and the ministry that would continue after His departure. He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (John 16:7). Then He said, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come" (John 16:13).

When Jesus told the disciples they would receive the promise of the Father, He said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). In other words, they would testify of Him, represent Him, and demonstrate the reality of His Kingdom. They would receive the power of enablement. Jesus was giving them the same responsibility the Father had given Him: to reveal the Kingdom, preach the truth, heal the sick, set captives free, and destroy the works of the devil. We also, through the Holy Spirit, have the energy of God working through us, enabling us to show Jesus to the world. The Holy Spirit activates God's Word in us and enables us to demonstrate the Gospel of the Kingdom. We preach the Kingdom by demonstrating the power of the Kingdom. Hallelujah for the Holy Spirit.

Let us take a moment to read and take in the following scriptures to fully understand the transformation that the Holy Spirit brings you.

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**John 14:26** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

**Ephesians 3:15-20I** pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be FILLED to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

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**Luke 3:16** John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

**Acts 2:38** Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

**Acts 4:31** And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

**Acts 2:3-4** Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

**Luke 4:18-19** The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

**John 7:38-39** He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

**Romans 14:17** For the Kingdom of God is not what is eaten and not what is being drunk, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

**1 Corinthians 12:8-11** For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

**2 Corinthians 3:17** Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

**Ephesians 5:18b-19** But be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

**Jude 20.** But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.

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**Acts 2:17-18** And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

**John 16:13** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

Embrace this power, step confidently into your calling, and live as an engaged disciple of Jesus Christ.

# The Kingdom is in POWER



"For the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20).

This Scripture shows us that the Word of God was never meant to be preached as mere religious information, separated from the manifestation of the Spirit's power. The Word of God is always living and powerful, but when the Word is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, it pierces hearts, breaks bondages, awakens faith, and does what human wisdom can never do.

Jesus explained to the Pharisees when they questioned His authority to cast out demons and He replied that He could not do such miracles without the power of the Kingdom of God. He said, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28). In other words, the power of the Kingdom was being revealed through deliverance. The Kingdom of God confronts everything that came through sin, darkness, bondage, disease, torment, and the works of the devil. Therefore, if the Gospel truly reveals the Kingdom, it must carry power to set people free.

The Kingdom of God is not revealed in word only, but also in miracles, signs, and wonders. Jesus did not send His disciples to preach a powerless Gospel with no demonstration. To the contrary, all of the early disciples operated in power. They did not just preach a Gospel of mere words without miracles and wonders.

Again, for Jesus to send the Holy Spirit after His resurrection, it was so that the disciples could have miraculous power even after Jesus was no longer with them. The Apostle Paul confirmed that by saying, "For our Gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thessalonians 1:5). And to the Corinthians, he added, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith

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should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4 and 5).

The Gospel preached by the Apostle Paul was accompanied by many miracles and wonders. Paul told the Romans in chapter 15 that he would not venture to speak of anything except what Christ had done through him in leading those who are not Jews to obey God. That they had obeyed God because of what he had said and done, because of the power of miracles and the great things they saw.

That is what Jesus did, He demonstrated the power of the Kingdom of God by healing all who were sick or oppressed by demons! He later utterly defeated Satan by dying on the cross and by resurrecting from the grave. And immediately after He arose, He sent to all of us the Holy Spirit to empower us to demonstrate the same signs and wonders that He did while with us.

So in reality, the power of the Kingdom is manifested by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not merely a force; He is the One who reveals and demonstrates the power of God. At the onset of Jesus' ministry, He was baptized, the Holy Spirit came upon Him, and He began to move in the power of God. The Holy Spirit demonstrates the power of God and activates the life of Christ in us.

Paul explained this to the Corinthians when he said, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man" (1 Corinthians 12:7). As we receive the Holy Spirit, He manifests His gifts through the body of Christ: words of wisdom, words of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues. The Spirit distributes these gifts as He wills, and believers must be willing to step out in faith as He leads. The Kingdom of God is not dead. It is living and powerful. Therefore, signs, wonders, and transformed lives should accompany the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Living the true Gospel means allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us, manifesting His power in these many ways. The difference comes in pushing through in faith until you SEE miracles happen. Without miraculous power, the Kingdom of Heaven cannot be revealed. If the greatest of these is love, do we love enough to push through in faith until we see a breakthrough for those in need?

Let us all believe for miracles, as we go and preach the [miraculous] Kingdom of God. We must believe the Word of God above whatever circumstances we are faced with. It starts with us standing by God's Word

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and persevering until the desired results are seen as God is glorified. We preach a powerful Gospel and we are all called to perform the miraculous.

# Proceed As If Success Is Inevitable



Jesus relentlessly pursued the destruction of the devil's works and consistently proclaimed the Kingdom of Heaven. His focus was so absolute that He expressed astonishment at the disciples' lack of faith, even rebuking them for their fear during storms and their inability to cast out demons.

The history of God's servants who became utterly consumed by their divine missions leaves a legacy of faith lived to the full. Their conversations revolved around spiritual matters, God's commission, and worldly topics held little interest. As Paul declared, "This one thing I do..." Having been translated from darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son, we are no longer citizens of this world and should, therefore, cease our preoccupation with worldly affairs.

The Gospel reveals the Kingdom of the Father and empowers us to enforce Christ's victory on earth. Jesus' command to "occupy till I come" should stir us like a conquering army securing territory until the rightful King is fully revealed. We have been empowered by the victory of Jesus, and we are called to enforce that victory by destroying the works of the devil around us.

Grace is not merely a liberator. Grace also empowers. It frees us from sin's bondage, not so we can indulge the flesh, but so we can live victoriously above it and establish Jesus' righteous reign on earth. Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously warned against what he called "cheap grace," meaning grace without repentance, grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, and grace without obedience to Jesus' commands. It is a false kind of grace that stresses forgiveness while neglecting repentance and obedience. It wants blessing without surrender, comfort without the cross, and silence in the face of wrongdoing. On the other hand, Bonhoeffer said, "Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has" (Matthew 13:44).

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We as Christians must be very sensitive to the dangers of comfort. Comfort puts us to sleep. Everything in this world caters to comfort and convenience and sadly, the church adheres to this philosophy. We have a remote control so we do not have to get off the couch. Christianity is not for comfort. We cannot be watching TV every day and expect to perform miracles. We cannot just expect to pause our favorite TV show to go pray for the sick and expect a miracle. It takes more commitment than that. The most uncomfortable place for a Christian is a comfortable one.

It is true that salvation does not cost you a dime, because Jesus paid the full price. But living out your Christianity will cost you your life. Jesus said, "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself." Christianity is not passive. It is first a life of surrender, obedience, and spiritual warfare. Much of the New Testament speaks in the language of battle, endurance, armor, weapons, victory, and resistance. Though Christ has already won the victory, we are called to enforce that victory. Creation itself is waiting for the sons of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19).

Every hour, nearly 7,000 people die which means that every day nearly 170,000 people die. It is given to man to once die, and then the judgment... not to be reincarnated, and have another chance. How many of those people actually go to Heaven because of our vigilant and militant effort to tell them the truth about salvation?

Paul said, "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes" (Romans 1:16). This divine power compels us to illuminate the world with truth. We are not mere adherents of a passive religion. We are soldiers in a spiritual army, united by a singular purpose: to proclaim the truth, reveal God's Kingdom, and stand against the works of the devil.

We must become fearless warriors, not only for our children, who are prime targets of the devil, but also for the lost souls of the world. By immersing ourselves in the Word, we can reflect its light and enforce its truth.

We are fools for Christ's sake. As Paul wrote, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him." Remember, God does not call the qualified; He qualifies the called. Our ability to disciple others stems not from our own strength but from the Holy Spirit's power. The radical transformation of conversion and the subsequent dedication of one's life to God often baffle the world. Like Paul, who was deemed insane due to

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his dramatic change, and Jesus Himself, who was accused of madness (John 10:20), many of God's servants have been so labeled and ridiculed.

Throughout history, prophets and men of God have been labeled as eccentrics or visionaries. Their unwavering devotion to God and their radical lifestyle has often alienated them from the world. However, it is the world that is truly off-center, devoid of God's guidance and truth. It is them who are warbling around themselves way off the One and the only true center, Jesus Christ. Man without God is off center.

Let us strive for instant obedience, always “instant”. Instant discipline, instant witnessing, always preaching the Gospel and leading others to the Lord, instant in showing Jesus' love wherever we go. Even if it means we appear to be “fools for Christ's sake.”

# Sharing Your Faith is Mandatory



In today's fast-paced world, where ideas and information travel almost instantly, one would think that the Gospel, the greatest news humanity has ever received, would be spreading like wildfire. Yet within the Christian community, a troubling silence persists. Despite the commission at the very center of Christ's commands, many believers remain quiet.

The statistics are sobering: 80% of Christians do not consistently witness for Christ, and 95% have never led a single soul to Him. These numbers reveal a crisis in the Church—a crisis not of resources or opportunities but of obedience and urgency.

Sharing your faith is not optional for Christians. It is not a task reserved for pastors, missionaries, or the exceptionally bold. It is mandatory for anyone who claims to follow Jesus. The Great Commission was not a suggestion; it was a command. In His final instructions before ascending into heaven, Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Similarly, in Mark's Gospel, He declared, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." (Mark 16:15-18). These are not words we can ignore or delegate to someone else. To follow Christ is to obey His commands, and evangelism is at the heart of those commands.

Yet many Christians hesitate. Fear often takes center stage—fear of rejection, fear of offending someone, or fear of saying the wrong thing. But Jesus addressed this fear directly when He said, "If anyone is ashamed of me

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and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). Those are weighty words. If we truly believe that Jesus is who He says He is—the Savior of the world—how can we be ashamed to speak about Him? Faith that does not lead to action is no faith at all. As James wrote so plainly, "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17).

Sharing your faith is not just about obedience; it is about evidence. It is proof that your faith is alive and active. Jesus Himself said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" (John 15:16). Bearing fruit means living in such a way that others are drawn to Christ through your words and actions. It means stepping out in faith, even when it is uncomfortable or inconvenient. It means being fishes of men, whereby we lead souls to the Lord and disciple them so that they in turn can share the light of the world with an aching populace.

The stakes could not be higher. When we remain silent about our faith, we risk leaving others in spiritual darkness. Paul posed a series of rhetorical questions in Romans that should shake us out of complacency: "How can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Romans 10:14). The Gospel cannot save those who never hear it. James adds an even more urgent note: "Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). Sharing your faith is not just about fulfilling a duty; it is about rescuing souls from eternal separation from God. That's quite the sobering thought.

At its core, evangelism flows from love—love for God and love for others. Paul wrote with deep conviction, "For Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). If we truly love others as Christ loves us, how can we keep silent about the hope and salvation found in Him? Jesus Himself said that repentance and forgiveness should be preached in His name to all nations (Luke 24:47). Love compels action because love understands what is at stake.

Christians are also called to represent Christ wherever they go. Paul described believers as ambassadors for Christ when he wrote, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador does not speak on their own behalf but faithfully represents their leader's message. In the same way, Peter

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urged Christians to always be ready to give an answer for their hope but to do so with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). Sharing your faith is not about forcing beliefs on others or winning arguments; it is about pointing people to Jesus with humility and love.

Despite these clear biblical commands and motivations, many Christians remain hesitant. Fear looms large—fear of being ridiculed or rejected—but rejection isn't personal; it is directed at Christ Himself. Jesus reminded His disciples of this truth when He said, "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me" (Luke 10:16). Our responsibility is simply to share the message faithfully; it is God who changes hearts.

There is a very sobering warning in Ezekiel 3:17-19: "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked person, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for[a] their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person and they do not turn from their wickedness or from their evil ways, they will die for their sin; but you will have saved yourself.

It underscores the profound responsibility of those who know the truth to act as watchmen, warning others of spiritual danger. Once exposed to the light of God's word, accountability is not optional—it is a divine mandate. Failing to warn others when we possess knowledge of their peril results in culpability before God, as their "blood" is required at our hands.

can you add a paragraph developing the following thought: How sad would it be once we arrive in heaven and have a glance at all those who did not make it to heaven telling us why did not you tell me? Were you afraid to warn me? Because you didn't tell me, I'm now where I am for eternity.

Imagine the unspeakable sorrow of standing in the glory of heaven, only to have the faces of those we once knew—family, friends, neighbors, coworkers—flash before us. Now separated eternally, they cry out, "Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you warn me? Were you too afraid to speak the truth?" The weight of their words would pierce our hearts as we realize that our silence played a role in their eternal destiny.

How devastating it would be to know that we had opportunities to share the gospel, to warn them of the consequences of sin and the hope found in Christ, but instead chose comfort or fear over obedience. Their cries would

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echo with haunting finality: “Because you didn’t tell me, I am now where I am for eternity.” This sobering thought should compel us to take our responsibility seriously, recognizing that every soul matters and that eternity is at stake. Our silence is not neutral—it has consequences. To withhold the truth is to withhold the opportunity for salvation, and that is a burden no believer should ever carry into eternity.

This principle echoes throughout Scripture: greater knowledge demands greater responsibility (Luke 12:47-48). Believers must actively share God’s truth, knowing that neglecting this duty carries eternal consequences for both the unrepentant and the silent.

We must not let complacency rule out priorities. Many Christians are content with attending church services but fail to live out their faith during the week. This kind of passive Christianity misses the point entirely. Following Christ means denying yourself daily and taking up your cross (Luke 9:23). It means prioritizing His mission over personal comfort or fear.

The consequences of silence extend beyond individuals—they affect entire communities and generations. Without evangelism, churches shrink as fewer people come to know Christ. Cultural influence diminishes as Christian voices grow quieter in public discourse. Personal spiritual growth stagnates because sharing your faith often deepens your own understanding and commitment. Perhaps most tragically, younger generations grow up without exposure to Christian teachings because older believers failed to pass on their faith.

But there is hope if we act now. The first step is prayer—praying for boldness like the early Church did in Acts 4:29—and equipping ourselves with knowledge through Scripture and resources on evangelism. Most importantly, it requires action. Start small by sharing your testimony with a friend or inviting someone to church. Trust God to work through your efforts.

Christianity is not about checking religious boxes or attending church once a week—it is about living as a disciple of Jesus every day. True discipleship means obeying Christ’s command to share the Gospel boldly and lovingly. As Paul declared with conviction in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.”

The time for silence has passed. Let us rise above fear and complacency to proclaim this life-changing message with urgency and love. Eternity hangs in

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the balance—for us and for those who have yet to hear the Good News. Christianity without evangelism is not Christianity at all—it is just religion stripped of its power and purpose. Let us no longer be part of the silent majority but instead become bold witnesses for Christ because there is no greater calling than this.

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Below is a series of verses that we must be aware of in order to understand the obligation of sharing our faith:

### **Matthew 28:19-20**

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

### **Mark 16:15**

"He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'"

### **Romans 10:17**

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word about Christ."

### **1 Peter 3:15**

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,"

### **Acts 1:8**

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

### **2 Timothy 4:2**

"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."

**Matthew 5:16**

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

**Colossians 4:5-6**

"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

**1 Corinthians 9:22**

"To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some."

**Philippians 2:15-16**

"So that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.' Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life..."

**2 Corinthians 5:20**

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

**Luke 12:8**

"I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God."

**James 5:20**

"Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins."

**John 15:16**

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."

**Ephesians 6:19-20**

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"Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given to me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

# Let's Put Some Skin on Commitment



My spiritual journey began in 1972 while I was backpacking through Europe. I was a young man searching for truth and purpose. After traveling through Europe for quite some time, I found myself in Amsterdam among a vibrant community of people from the Jesus Revolution. I had been raised in “churchianity” and definitely had my reservations about anything connected to Jesus. But seeing these believers in action showed me that there was another side of Jesus worth discovering. Through them, I received the Lord, and I also received the Holy Spirit.

At the time, I spoke French and very little English. But there was a young woman whose love and passion for Christ transcended words, even though we spoke different languages. She gave me a French Bible. She would read verses in English and then help me find them in my French Bible. Through her, I came to a new understanding of Jesus, radical, revolutionary, and overflowing with love. That day, I was born again. I decided to put my faith in Jesus, and I was forever changed.

For one, a ten-year struggle with smoking vanished instantly. And that emptiness in my heart was forever gone. I had found something worth living for. What truly distinguished this “Jesus Revolution” was their dedication to spreading the Gospel. They were not passive believers; they actively shared the Good News with everyone they encountered, emulating the teachings of Jesus and his disciples (Acts 2:42). They were the continuation of the book of Acts; Acts 29 lived out...

For the first three months after my conversion, I immersed myself in Bible study and outreach alongside this community. We went out in pairs, just as Jesus sent His disciples two by two (Mark 6:7). We were full of the Word of God. Going out to evangelize was not done out of obligation. It was simply the overflow of our hearts. Every evening, we returned home with testimonies of lives touched and new converts eager to serve the Lord. Our team grew steadily, a testimony to the power of discipleship.

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I urge you to consider adopting this active discipleship lifestyle. Find a partner, a fellow believer, and go on mission together to spread the Gospel. Whether it is your spouse, child, friend, or a new convert, there is strength in walking together.

King Solomon highlighted the strength of going together when he wrote, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion” (Ecclesiastes 4:9 to 10). Jesus also emphasized the power of unity when He said, “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 18:19). Then He added, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). There is undeniable power in shared faith, agreement, and purpose.

I should add that witnessing can be a real spiritual battleground. The enemy will fight you when you decide to go out and reach others. He will tempt you with distractions, urging you to prioritize other tasks on your to-do list. He will remind you of things you forgot to do, all for the purpose of distracting you. But remember, commitment is key. Do not allow these detours to derail your mission.

Witnessing is actually launching war against the strongholds of the enemy. Paul said, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:3 to 4).

Make it a habit to shine your light. Regularly let others know about God’s love, and offer encouragement and prayer. In the book of Acts, the apostles said, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). You want to get to the place where you naturally let people know that God loves them. Look for ways to let the Lord manifest that love through you by being a listening ear, offering guidance or encouragement, and praying for them before you leave, whether for healing, direction, or deliverance.

I want to share a few tips with you on how to approach people. There are many scenarios that will take place when meeting people for the first time. The most important thing is to be led by the Holy Spirit. But if you commit to being a beacon out there, you’ll soon find ways to engage with people (Matthew 5:14-16).

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First, I like to greet people with a compliment. Very few people take the time to encourage others, and encouragement often brightens a person's whole countenance. It opens up their heart to receiving more of what you have to say.

If they have some kind of pain that is obvious, I will immediately ask them if I can pray for them to remove it. And I usually ask if I can hold their hand, as a point of contact, and command healing to take place. It does not have to be a long prayer, it is God that does the healing. It is your trust in the Holy Spirit power and your faith in action.

But otherwise, I will usually engage in small talk. When you first meet people, they usually ask, "How are you doing?" So, I take that greeting as a real question and I'll say something like:

"I found the LOVE... and I'm out to tell everyone about it."

"I'm living the dream..."

"I'm blessed to BLISS... everything I touch turns to gold because what I speak, comes to pass."

"I've been hearing nothing but good news..."

"Busting with JOY, unspeakable joy..."

"I'm happy!" (During Covid, I'd add..."Be careful, it's more contagious than the virus...").

Or, I would say, "I'm happy... You know happiness has to be cultivated. Love was not put in our heart to stay, love is not love unless you give it away."

In other words, I start the conversation with something that throws me into the deep end, where I either have to explain more or they have to ask me what I mean. From there, I usually talk about one of God's spiritual laws, how it works in life, and how people can be blessed as they apply it. Such as:

The power of words. How we reap what we sow through our words. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21).

The power of praise. How praise conditions your mind and keeps it from worrying. "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me" (Psalms 50:23).

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The power of generosity. How there is even more pleasure and fulfillment in giving than in receiving, essentially saying that the act of giving brings more blessing or happiness than receiving something yourself. “it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)

The power of forgiveness. How liberating it is to let go of past grudges. “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Matthew 6:14).

The power of love. How one can live such a fulfilling and inspiring life, just through giving love to others. “Love is patient, kind, does not envy, it does not boast, not proud, does not dishonor others, is not self-seeking, not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs, does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth, always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

The power of humility. I used to be a proud man, but I have found that living life without pretension, just being real, sincere and humble can make my everyday so full. I have a very strong sense of personal identity. It was given to me by Christ. “For God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).

God has established many powerful spiritual and physical laws in our world that we must use and also teach others to use in order to bless them and their everyday living.

I also like to use Scripture to support what I am saying because it shows that I am not speaking from my own wisdom, but from God’s Word. It also helps people understand that they can go to the Word themselves and find the same answers.

That is why it is important to memorize God’s Word. Until you have your favorite verses memorized, you can carry a small New Testament. In my case, I carry The Handbook for a Disciple of Jesus because I am very familiar with it. I also have it as a PDF on my phone so I can show people verses and read them together. Letting them read the Word for themselves is even more powerful because they see it with their own eyes. It teaches them that they can find answers in God’s Word for themselves.

Leading someone to the Lord is one of the greatest gifts you can give them. So ask if they would like the Lord to reveal Himself to them. I usually ask if they would like to turn over the steering wheel of their life to the Lord

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and make Him the captain of their destiny. If they agree, I lead them in a prayer of repentance and salvation.

I want to include here a sample prayer of salvation:

“Dear Jesus, I don’t want my sin nature to separate me from You any longer. You have promised that if I confess my sins, repent and ask for forgiveness, that I will be forgiven. I believe in You, and in the sacrifice You’ve made to redeem me, by dying and rising again to reunite me with the Father. I receive your salvation by grace, through faith, and not by anything I do. I want you to be my Lord, my Savior. I want to live the way You created me to live, for the rest of my life”.

Before leaving them, I also try to bless them with a gift. Remember, God is a giver, and when you give to the needy, and everyone has needs, you are lending to the Lord, and He will repay. “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again” (Proverbs 19:17).

Are you ready? Are you willing? Are you thankful for all that Jesus did for you, and consequently are eager to share His love with others? Commit now! Decide now! Pair up with someone, decide on a time, and make a plan. You may want to avail yourself of some fantastic tracts at: [antracts.com](http://antracts.com), or give them a copy of a New Testament which you can find at: <https://www.gospeltractandbible.org>. I honestly prefer giving people The Handbook for a Disciple of Jesus because it leads them immediately toward discipleship and gives them the Scriptures they need to ignite and activate their faith.

Let's do it! As you step out, you will be amazed at what God will do to show you how much He wants to show His love to this world. Remember, we have already won! And it is an ongoing win-win! There isa harvest to be gathered.

# Speak Your Destiny into Existence



Get ready to transform your life by harnessing the power of your words! This life-changing lesson from the Word will revolutionize your life. All the difficulties you have had with health, with relationships, with finances, and any areas of your life that you have not really seen a breakthrough in for a long time, are all about to change.

For years, I struggled with negative self-talk about my finances and my ability to make and manage money. I would start businesses, yet never quite break through, and I labeled myself a “begging missionary,” always in need. But the Word declares that God’s people are called to be “the head and not the tail” (Deuteronomy 28:13), and that they would lend and not borrow (Deuteronomy 28:12). I had to stop agreeing with lack and begin agreeing with God’s Word.

Our fears of financial lack led to debts that seemed insurmountable. But diving into the Word on faith for finances changed everything. I committed to transforming my mindset and the words I spoke about my finances. I began to “call those things that are not as though they were” (Romans 4:17).

This revelation is crucial for manifesting continual blessings! In the parable of the sower, Jesus emphasized the importance of understanding this truth, “Know you not this parable? And how then will you know all parables” (Mark 4:13). God’s Word is a seed and our words are also seeds. What we say comes to pass! For us to keep speaking that fear of financial lack and that troublesome worry caused my wife and I to accumulate debts which we just did not know how we could ever repay.

So, after delving into the Word on the subject of faith for finances, I made a concerted effort to totally change my attitude, and especially the words coming out of my mouth concerning my finances.

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In Mark 11:23, Jesus gives us the formula in order to get the things that you desire when you pray. He mentioned three times the word "say", when speaking to the "mountain" to be moved. He said, "Whosoever shall SAY unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he SAYS shall come to pass; he shall have whatever he SAYS."

The material world actually responds to our words. You can speak what you desire. "Whatever things you desire, when you pray believe that you receive them, and you shall have them" (Matthew 11:24). Notice that it says, "believe when you pray." In other words, believe right there and then that you have already received it. You must call them to yourself through believing, by saying it.

Unfortunately, we tend to look at the circumstances with our physical eyes and we limit our faith to that. But we are supposed to CALL on the things that are not, to make them materialize! WOW! This truth from the Word was a revelation to me.

In the book of Romans, Paul spells out this principle very clearly. Paul refers to God talking to Abram, before he was named 'Abraham'. God actually changed Abram's name to Abraham which literally means 'father of many nations'. "Neither shall thy name anymore be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee" (Genesis 17:5). Paul is explaining that God called into existence the things that did not exist yet. "I have made you (notice the past tense) a father of many nations. And He called those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17). God had already settled the matter when speaking it to Abraham. Words spoken in faith are seeds, and they will bear fruit in due season.

This is so important to understand, because that is how continual blessings are manifested in our lives! When Jesus taught the parable of the sower and the seed, He told the disciples that this truth is the most important parable of the Bible. Again, He said, "Know you not this parable? And how then will you know ALL parables" (Mark 4:13). --Why? Our words are seeds we sow in our lives, and they bear fruit. What we say eventually comes to pass, and we will find ourselves living our lives in accordance with what we speak!

This is especially true when we use God's Word to claim His promises into our lives. When there's nothing in sight, you can plant a seed, and it will grow. Of course, as the parable says, your heart must be fertile with faith. It

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says, "He that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the Word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth some a hundredfold and some sixty, and some thirty" (Matthew 13:23).

To complain about our finances is to look at the parched ground and say, "Nothing's ever going to grow here!" That's only causing that curse to come to pass. Rather, change your speech into speaking well about your finances and how God prospers you, and how everything you touch turns to gold! Simply speak seeds of faith into the ground for your finances to flourish.

This principle is part of renewing the mind. But you also have to renew your mouth. You must train yourself to say what God says. Instead of lamenting over your problems, speak life. Declare God's promises over your health, your finances, your family, and your future. God revealed this law to Joshua when he was about to enter the Promised Land and lead Israel: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night... For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

Jesus demonstrated this power. He called water into wine (John 2:7-8), multiplied loaves and fishes (Matthew 14:19-20), and even called Lazarus from death to life (John 11:40-43). He spoke to the fig tree, the storm, and healed the sick. Even King David mentioned the power of God's Word when he said, "He sent His Word, and healed them, and delivered them out of their destructions" (Psalms 107:20). That is the power of authoritative speech! He spoke the desired outcome with authority.

Remember when Jesus "marveled" at the centurion who told Jesus, "Speak the Word only, and my servant shall be healed." Jesus then marveled not only at the fact that he understood the power of words, but also the power of authority. The centurion had just finished explaining to Jesus about the power of authority by saying, "I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, 'Go, and he goes; and to another, come, and he comes; and to my servant, do this, and he does it.' When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him" (Luke 7:7-9). The centurion understood how authoritative words work. He was essentially telling Jesus, "We have authority through our words". This is the law of "binding and loosing". Jesus told His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, 'Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven'" (Matthew 19:18). You must SPEAK it.

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You can speak and command the desired change in your health by saying, "Body, I speak the Word of faith to you. Proverbs 12:18 says, 'The tongue of the wise brings healing.'" You can speak to your finances the same way. Use God's Word and impose its truth on your bank account. Remember when Jesus said, "What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them." (Mark 11:24-26).

Your voice has atomic power that can change your world! God created the universe with His words, and as His image-bearers, filled with the Holy Ghost, we possess this same divine ability. Romans 10:8 says, "The Word of God is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart." Let's use this powerful tool to claim God's promises. You make your Christian life work for you by always and only speaking the desired outcome in faith. As a believer and a disciple you're speaking with the authority of Christ. Let's commit to changing our speech! From hereon, we will call the desired end into existence and believe. This is how God's blessings and miracles happen. You speak them into existence. When you are speaking God's will into your life, supported by His Word, you can expect those things to happen. This is one of the most powerful tools in the disciple's arsenal.

To further enforce this point read: "The POWER of PROCLAMATIONS" in the Daily Meds.

# Destroy The Works Of The Devil



While modern churches often shy away from preaching about divine healing, the Bible clearly empowers believers with the authority to heal the sick, cast out demons, and even raise the dead. As Jesus said to His twelve disciples, "And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease" (Matthew 10:1).

Throughout His ministry, Jesus demonstrated these miraculous powers. Today, He still desires to heal the sick, set the captives free, and deliver the oppressed. He calls us to "manifest" His Kingdom on earth, just as it is in heaven. As He instructed His disciples, "As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give'" (Matthew 10:7-8).

This authority and power are not reserved for a select few but are bestowed upon all believers. Jesus has liberated us from the limitations of "can't do," "can't be," and "can't have." We possess the light and power to overcome darkness. However, God awaits our obedience and action to bring His promises to fruition.

Our faith in Jesus must be accompanied by obedience to His commands. We are called to lay hands on the sick, as stated in Mark 16:17-18: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Our focus should not be solely on the outcome but on obeying God's command and sharing His love. As we persevere, the results will follow. The devil may tempt us to doubt when immediate results are not apparent, but true believers will not waver.

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Jesus did not merely pray for the sick; He commanded healing. He bestowed upon us His authority, empowering us to carry out His will. As He declared in Luke 10:19, "I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

When laying hands on the sick, we should command healing and persist in prayer until we see results. Remember, all sickness originates from the devil, not from God. James 1:13 states that God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone. Jesus' mission was to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). As believers, we have the power to participate in this divine work.

Jesus promised, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works (miracles) that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:12-14).

As true disciples of Christ, we are called to not only proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, but also to actively destroy the works of the devil as Jesus did. Let us embrace our divine authority and walk in faith, bringing healing and restoration to a broken world.

# Casting Your Pearls Before Swine



Success is a worthy pursuit, but true fulfillment lies in aligning our efforts with God's divine purpose. Time spent in pursuit of the wrong purpose or without purpose entirely is the greatest waste of human potential.

We all have a purpose designed by God. When we follow that purpose, our lives become filled with joy, peace, and a deep sense of meaning. We gain wisdom and knowledge, not merely to keep them for ourselves, but to share them with others and bless the world around us.

At the onset of His ministry, Jesus Christ provided a revolutionary blueprint for living. He urged us to prioritize the spiritual over the mundane—advising us to focus not on worldly concerns such as food, clothing, and shelter, but on the eternal kingdom of God. His promise was simple yet profound: prioritize the divine, and all these things will naturally follow. He said, “Do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:31-34).

This radical approach to life challenges our conventional thinking. Worrying is in fact the opposite of seeking the Kingdom of God. Medical scientists have now proven that worry is the main cause of all illnesses because it causes stress. It is an attempt to figure out our lives on our own. But according to God's Word, “It is not in man to figure out his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

Jesus' command to seek first the Kingdom of God really changes everything when it comes to prioritizing our lives. Interestingly, He never provided a second priority or what some may call “God's second best.” He

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said that if we seek first the Kingdom of God, all other things will align themselves and be provided for and added on to us, causing everything to fall into place. He essentially destroyed most of our “prayer list” by asking, “Why worry about what you’re going to eat, what you’re going to wear, and how you’re going to pay rent.” He said, “Tune in to one thing; the Kingdom of God and everything else will fall into place. Don’t even think about the rest.” --Why? Because, armed with the wisdom and truth we gather from God’s Word, our lives become beacons of inspiration, enabling us to enrich others and find daily contentment.

Jesus offers a singular focus, freeing us from the burden of unnecessary worry. He taught us that worrying does not empty tomorrow of its troubles, but today of its strength. He calls us to trust in His provision and to live in the present moment, without anxiety about the future. Worry depletes our strength and hinders our ability to address present challenges. By surrendering our concerns to God, we can experience the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Jesus’ miracles—casting out demons and healing the sick—were not just acts of compassion but demonstrations of the Kingdom’s power and presence. He likened the Kingdom to a priceless pearl for which a wise man sold everything else he owned to possess it.

So, what does it mean for us to “seek first the Kingdom of God”?

This commandment becomes a complete lifestyle and the more I learn about it, the more I want to learn! For me, it is important to begin the day with praise and thankfulness. Just taking time to acknowledge the Lord, and worshiping Him in those quiet moments.

Reading the Word, especially the Psalms first thing, will often put my heart on the right path to prepare for the days’ demands. Rushing into the day with all of its demands, beginning to worry about this and that is not putting the Lord first.

In fact, it is not really possible for me to take that quiet time with the Lord, communing with Him, unless I awaken a couple of hours before the day begins. There really is no way to follow the Lord closely, and be obedient to His Word, and thereby ‘seek first His Kingdom’ without spending time with Him in quiet communion, reading the Word, praying and listening to Him.

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When we take the needed time with Him, we are then ready to give, ready to love, ready to heal, ready to pray, ready to destroy the works of the enemy in people's lives. And all of our own concerns will be attended to by the Lord. Jesus led by example in all these aspects of life, exhibiting obedience to His Father, and He set the standard for His disciples to follow, and to produce good fruit by loving others, and infiltrating the world and making disciples. We are to prioritize God's values over our own concerns and definitely over worldly values and possessions.

Jesus assures us that He will care for our needs if we focus on living in obedience to His teachings and spreading the good news of the Kingdom. We are to bring the Kingdom of God on earth in words and in deed, by being a doer of His teachings and by extending His Kingship on earth. That is our assignment, that is what we are to seek first; the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

When Jesus sent His disciples out, He instructed them, "As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give." -Matthew 10:7-8. Notice that demonstrating the kingdom in power through healing and freeing the demonized is in the same sentence as proclaiming the kingdom of heaven. And by the way, he also told them specifically not to take any money, any purse, not even a change of clothes. He said "the labor is worthy of his hire". In other words, don't worry, God will take care of your every need.

In reality, Jesus only preached about the Kingdom of God, never on healing, deliverance, abundance, baptism, prosperity, or even being born again. And He told us to put the highest value on the Kingdom.

This commission and prioritization from the Lord calls for the re-examination of how we spend our time and what we prioritize in our lives. Time is our most valuable commodity, and spending it on non-productive activities is equivalent to squandering it. Our schedules are chock-full of unproductive tasks that do not bear good fruit in our lives.

I am convinced that keeping people occupied with pointless activities is one of the devil's most effective tools. Though we may be busy, most of us believers are not accomplishing as much for the Kingdom as Jesus instructed us to. Being productive should be valued above being busy. Paradoxically, failure can be the result of working hard and doing excellent work, yet on the wrong thing; missing our destiny and purpose altogether.

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In view of what Jesus gave us as our priority, many of us need to reset our compass. Our time is the most valuable currency we possess. How we spend our time shapes our destiny; we are the culmination of all the time we have invested. Each day we are all given the same currency: 24 hours. The key is to use that time wisely and focus on activities that will help us promote the Kingdom of God, as per the one priority given us by the Lord.

The Bible teaches us to redeem the time, because the days are evil. Most people do not realize that time is an actual currency that you can measure life with, not money. You actually use time to buy life. Whatever you have, you have purchased it with your time. That is why people pay you to hire out your time; doing what they want you to do with your time.

Even our friends and family can demand our time. It becomes more and more important to check the time wasters in our lives. The book of Proverbs is full of advice on choosing our company and activities. Otherwise, we could be “casting your pearls before swine” -expending effort or resources on unworthy pursuits—just like the prodigal son did, paying a high price for worthless pursuits.

When we waste a significant amount of time, the feeling is the same as a hangover; emptiness, frustration, and dissatisfaction with nothing to show or gain from it. Divertissement is entertainment that diverts you from your priorities, goals and challenges, and is equivalent to spending a night at the casino, seduced by a streak of luck and ultimately losing everything.

We all have a story we tell ourselves about what matters most in our lives. Family, health, personal growth, faith—these values roll off our tongues with practiced ease. But there is a glaring reality we often overlook: our true priorities are not found in our words or intentions, but in the cold, hard data of our daily lives.

Think of your life as a heat map. The hotspots—where you spend your time and money—reveal what truly matters to you, regardless of what you might claim. It's a sobering thought, isn't it? We might proclaim our devotion to family while consistently choosing hobby over dinner with our children. We might speak passionately about fitness while our unused gym membership quietly snickers at our good intentions.

The mathematics of priority is surprisingly simple: Time + Money = heart. The Bible says, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”. If you want to know what someone truly values, don't listen to their words—

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examine their calendar and their bank statements. Your heart is where you spend your money and your time. These two ledgers tell an unvarnished story of our actual priorities, stripped of the comfortable fictions we craft about ourselves.

We, as followers of Christ, have a greater calling and consequently we must find the ‘off’ switch on the remote control, on wasteful habits, and on being lured by advertisements, on those “shining objects“ that the world entices us with. Spending unproductive hours in media distractions will only leave us intellectually and spiritually impoverished, without any gains in wisdom or knowledge.

This commandment from Jesus to seek first the Kingdom is a call for us to reassess our priorities. Our time is a treasure that should not be spent on the frivolous but invested in the eternal. It is time to turn off the distractions, to shut down the timewasters, and to live with purpose and passion for the Kingdom of God.

Are you ready to redefine success? Are you prepared to make the Kingdom of God your primary pursuit? Let this be the moment you choose to live a life of eternal significance, a life rich with divine purpose and godly pursuit. Let us realign our compasses and live not just for the now, but for the forever. Let us live for the Kingdom of God.

# Are His Commandments Grievous?



I have been thinking about a verse from 1 John that made me reflect deeply on the commandments Jesus gave in the New Testament. First John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.”

Jesus was controversial to say the least. He came to strip away the layers of rigid rules that had obscured God's true message. He challenged what was being taught by the legalistic Pharisees of the day, shaking the very foundations of religious tradition. These were not just bold statements – they were spiritual dynamite, blasting through centuries of distorted interpretation.

In fact, He would often address the Pharisees by saying, “It has been said... but I say unto you!” That was quite outrageous for the religious people because in their eyes, He was challenging the law. Think of the religious leaders of His time as gatekeepers who had locked the doors to heaven with chains of rules and regulations. Jesus called them out openly in Matthew 23:13-14,

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in”.

They had turned faith into a maze of regulations and stipulations where people wandered endlessly, never finding the true path to God.

Jesus came as a spiritual revolutionary, bringing fresh water to a parched land. As John 1:17 beautifully puts it, “The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” It was like switching from black-and-white to full color – suddenly, everyone saw God in a new light. The law was not meant to be a prison; it was meant to be a pathway to God's heart. He made that very clear when He said, in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”.

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His demands on His followers along with his radical message challenged the religious norms of His time, and even today, His words can seem demanding and counter cultural. He challenged people to think differently about everything, and that is why His teachings were, and still are, revolutionary.

His teachings touched every aspect of human existence; they were like rays of sunlight penetrating a dark room. He challenged conventional wisdom about money, career, relationships, family ties, and personal ambitions. Some found His words challenging, even polarizing – like a sword cutting through comfortable assumptions. He even said so in Matthew 10:34:

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword"

He spoke of controversial topics such as loving our enemies, putting others first, and viewing success through heaven's eyes rather than earth's perspective.

He boldly told the people to repent and to "Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). This was not about imposing new restrictions – it was about finding true freedom by following God's heart rather than human traditions.

Jesus' message was not just a slight adjustment to the old system; it was a complete reframing of what it means to know God. His teachings unlocked the mystery to a relationship with God based on love rather than fear, on grace rather than performance, on truth rather than tradition. His words still echo today, calling everyone of us away from empty religiosity toward a living, breathing faith that transforms hearts and lives.

So are God's commands really as demanding as they seem? When we look closer, we see these instructions reveal something deeper - they're actually showing us how God's Kingdom works. It is fascinating that John, one of Jesus' closest followers, made that bold claim in 1 John 5:1-5: "If you love me, obey my commands, and my commands are not burdensome." Think about that word "burdensome" for a second - it usually means something that weighs us down, something that is hard to carry. But John's saying the opposite happens when we love God - following His way becomes as natural as breathing.

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It is like switching from junk food to a healthy diet. At first, you might miss those late-night pizza binges and sugar rushes. But as your body adjusts, you start craving the good stuff. You feel better, stronger, more alive. That is what God's commands are like – they are not restrictions; they are recipes for living our best life.

Here is what makes this even better: we are not doing this alone. God's Spirit lives in us, giving us the power to actually live this way. In Romans 5:5 Paul says, “hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”.

And again in Romans 8:12–13, he says, "So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living in accord with the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live

As Peter puts it in 2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" It's like having a personal trainer who not only shows you what to do but also gives you the strength to do it.

Think about it this way: sin is the real burden. It is like carrying around a backpack full of rocks - it damages our relationships, messes with our minds, and keeps us from being who we're meant to be. Jesus said it straight up in John 8:34

"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin".

So, contrary to popular opinion, sin does not free us, rather, it traps us.

Here is a simple picture. A dog that fights every command needs constant restraint, leashes, fences, and correction. But a well-trained dog walking beside its owner has a different kind of freedom. It stays close, not only because it must, but because trust has been formed. That is what God desires in us, not forced compliance, but a relationship where obedience flows naturally from love and trust.

Let us look at some of those commands.

Have you ever had to choose between two things you deeply love? Jesus introduced one of the most challenging concepts in Christianity when He redefined what family means in God's Kingdom. His words in Matthew 10:37 shocked many, especially because the commandment tells us to honor our father and mother. Jesus said, “He that loves father or mother more than

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Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” In other words, we must honor our parents, but we must never place family above God.

Jesus was reshaping our understanding of family ties. When told that His mother and brothers were waiting outside to speak with Him, He gestured to His disciples and said, “Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother, and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:50). This was not a casual statement. It was a divine declaration that in God’s Kingdom, spiritual bonds supersede blood relations. Through salvation, we are grafted into a new family and adopted into God’s royal household.

This radical perspective becomes even clearer when a man asked Jesus if he could first bury his father before following Him. In Luke 9:60, Jesus responded with words that still challenge us today: "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God". Imagine being in that man's sandals for a moment. His request seemed like a reasonable request, doesn't it? But Jesus saw beyond cultural obligations to eternal priorities. Think about it: if you were on a far-flung mission field, teaching at a convention of young pastors eager to know about dedicated discipleship, and you receive news that a relative passed away and family is urging you to come back, what would truly serve God's purpose more?

Jesus then adds another layer to this teaching in Luke 9:62,

"No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God".

Like a farmer who can't plow a straight line while looking backward, our spiritual journey demands forward focus. The past is like quicksand – whether it's filled with failures that haunt us or successes that tempt us to rest on our laurels, looking back can pull us under. As Paul beautifully puts it in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"

At the heart of His teachings are two foundational commandments, like two mighty pillars supporting everything else. They are found in Matthew 22:37 to 40: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

This reminded people of God’s first commandment to Israel: “I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

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Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2 to 3). In our modern world, these "other gods" might not be golden calves, but they're just as dangerous – social media, materialism, career success, or even family ties when placed above God.

This singular devotion extends to our relationship with wealth too. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters, you cannot serve God and mammon (money)". Money should be like a tool in a carpenter's belt – useful for building God's kingdom, but never the object of our worship.

The culmination of these teachings leads to perhaps the most profound paradox of faith as He brought out in Matthew 16:24, dying to live.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me".

The path of true discipleship requires what might seem counter-intuitive: death to self. Jesus Himself highlighted this in John 12:24,

saying that we are as a seed that must die in order to produce fruit; "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. So our self-centered carnal nature must yield to bear spiritual fruit.

Look at a devoted mother – her "death to self" in serving her child doesn't diminish her; it transforms her into something more beautiful. When we empty ourselves of self-importance, we become vessels through which God's love can flow most purely.

This self-denial is not about diminishment – it's about transformation. Just as a caterpillar must surrender its form to become a butterfly, we must surrender our old identities to embrace our new life in Christ. When we do, we do not just change our behavior; we change our very nature; we let go of the old man and become living testimonies of God's transforming power.

The principle of dying to oneself is the way to a life of fruitfulness. This principle is embedded in all creation.

And it applies also to discipleship as well: Think of a compass needle, always drawn to true north. Similarly, Jesus taught that our hearts should be magnetically drawn to God above all else – even above family.

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Jesus challenges also our natural inclination to judge others with a powerful metaphor in Matthew 7:3: he said,

“Why do you behold the mote that is in your brother's eye, but don't consider the beam that is in your own eye?”

He was as good as saying, "you're trying to perform eye surgery while being partially blind yourself". His warning, "Judge not, that you be not judged" in Matthew 7:1, isn't just about being nice – it's about recognizing our own flawed perspective. We often rank sins like items on a menu, but in God's eyes, sin is sin, whether it's a white lie or a major transgression. So, trying to judge other people with our distorted perspective is very dangerous.

Imagine a lighthouse keeper covering his beacon on a stormy night. That would be absurd. Yet that is exactly the point Jesus made when He said, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14 to 15). Once you have experienced God's truth, love, peace, and joy, hiding it makes no sense. Our lives should become living testimonies that cause others to “see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Jesus also confronts the fear of man. Fear can become like chains that bind us, but Jesus cuts through that bondage with eternal perspective. He said in Matthew 10:28, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

It is like being so worried about the critic's opinion that you forget you are performing for the King. Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man brings a snare: but whoso puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” When we are consumed by people's opinions, we are like a ship that has abandoned its compass.

Jesus also warned us about craving universal praise: “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you” (Luke 6:26). In other words, if everyone is applauding, we may need to ask whether we are performing for the wrong audience. Paul reinforces this in Galatians 6:3: “For if a man thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” The applause of men is temporary, but the approval of God is eternal.

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Jesus poses another question that strips away all pretense in Matthew 16:26: “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

To trade eternal inheritance for temporary treasure is foolishness. That is what happens when we prioritize worldly success over spiritual wealth. Peter urges us to “gird up the loins of your mind” (1 Peter 1:13), and Paul calls us to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

Here is the beautiful paradox: in this Kingdom that calls us to swim against the current, we are given supernatural courage. We are not left alone to overcome our difficulties. Paul reminds us that God has not given us “a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). If we truly relied on how deeply we are loved by the Father, fear would lose its grip. We can declare with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:6).

Standing for Christ in a world that often stands against Him is not easy. Standing firm in faith sometimes means standing alone in a crowd. That is why Jesus warned us in Luke 9:26, “Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed.”

Being ashamed of your faith makes you deny your convictions. Plus, if you are not willing to stand up for what you believe, it does not say much about your faith, nor of your love, because if you say you love God, you should also love your fellow man, enough to share the truth in love with him, even if the truth may hurt. He is calling us to an authenticity that values eternal approval over temporary acceptance. It is about living with such conviction that our lives themselves become a testimony, even when our words might be met with resistance.

One of the most beautiful aspects of Jesus' teachings is their gentle nature. Far from being burdensome, they offer rest to weary souls. He actually said so in Matthew 11:28,

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"

These are not just words – they are an invitation to experience peace that defies human understanding.

We should think of all of these commandments as guardrails on a mountain road - they do not restrict our journey; they protect us and guide us

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to our destination. They liberate us from the world's distorted wisdom and false teachings. Jesus was not establishing a prison of rules; He was providing a pathway to freedom. As He declared in John 10:10, "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly".

These teachings are like keys that unlock the chains of darkness that once bound us. They realign our spiritual compass, pointing us toward what truly matters. When Jesus said in John 8:31-32, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" He was offering us a passport to true freedom.

We should consider discipline not as a harsh taskmaster but as a skilled mentor. Just as an athlete's training transforms their abilities, spiritual discipline shapes our character. It is a beautiful progression:

Discipline becomes habit

Habits form lifestyle

Lifestyle molds character

Character determines destiny

We should not see discipline as strenuous and constraining, but as the necessary instructions and actual training leading to true freedom and emancipation. Discipline promotes growth and progress.

Once you take religiosity and legalism out of the Gospel, it all comes down to obedience to a healthy discipline of following infallible laws as obedient citizens to the overall discipline of God's kingdom. Obedience makes discipleship so simple. Like immigrants receiving new citizenship, we've been given a new passport, new rights, and new responsibilities in His kingdom.

Jesus did not just teach these principles - He lived them. Every day of His ministry demonstrated how to advance God's kingdom through actions, not just words. And then He gave us something extraordinary: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

This transfer of authority is like being handed the keys to a powerful vehicle. We are not just passive observers; we are active participants in advancing God's kingdom against darkness. Through His victory and in His

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name, we carry His power of attorney. We are not just empowered – we are entrusted with a sacred responsibility to live out these truths

Remember: knowledge brings accountability. These keys to kingdom living are not meant to sit unused – they are meant to unlock doors, break chains, and build bridges between heaven and earth.

We have gone over 20 different commandments and teachings of Jesus which originally appeared stringent and burdensome. Not only are his commandments not burdensome and hard to obey, but as we abide by them and apply them in our life, we find so much rest, clarity and understanding.

Can you imagine what the world would look like if these principles and spiritual laws were taught to children from the beginning? If our children were raised with the right standards and the right parameters, the world would be a very different place.

Throughout the Gospels, we discover more of Jesus' distinct commandments and principles, and there are countless more throughout the books of the Bible waiting to be uncovered. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. When reading God's Word, we must meditate on why Jesus gave these guidelines.

Think of Jesus' parables as intricate puzzle boxes - they do not just open at first glance. They reveal their treasures to those who truly hunger for righteousness, those who take time to turn them over in their minds and hearts so that those undeniable and infallible principles would be revealed to us who hunger after the things of the spirit. It is no coincidence that Jesus chose to teach this way.

These stories unfold like blooming flowers, revealing layer after layer of truth to those who earnestly seek understanding. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "but the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned".

But Paul said to the Corinthians, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God". In other words, the carnal mind cannot really grasp those spiritual principles that Jesus taught. They go against what the world teaches.

So His commandments are liberating and filled with wisdom and guidance. They set us free from the false teachings and distorted principles

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we receive from the world. His laws and commands realign the priorities of our lives and deliver us from the kingdom of darkness. Jesus was teaching people to focus on the most important principles of life and to hold firmly to the priorities that make life worth living for the Kingdom and for others.

He was telling people to get rid of the wrongdoings and wrong priorities that were enslaving and destroying them. He was readjusting their mindset by teaching values and fundamentals that would liberate them from the shackles holding them back. Remember what He said in John 8:31 to 32: “If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

On my website, [faithwithoutborders.us](http://faithwithoutborders.us), you will find a devotional entitled “Make These Laws Work for You.” In it, I discuss more of these spiritual laws, explain their truth, and show how they can work powerfully in our lives when we apply them.

# Christianity is NOT Churchianity



True Christianity requires discipleship-making. Pastors, as spiritual leaders, must prioritize the training of disciples. Pastors should be taking their church members out to the street to witness to the community, regularly. Christianity cannot be lived out in church, once a week. Nothing about discipleship points to a once-a-week meeting. Regular gatherings for prayer, evangelism, and Bible study are essential to fostering a community of believers committed to living out their faith. However, these gatherings should extend beyond the church walls, with believers actively sharing the transformative power of the cross in their daily lives. A once-a-week church service is insufficient to cultivate a deep and abiding relationship with Christ.

When Paul was reprimanding the Corinthians saying why are you promoting division by saying, “I am of Paul, or “I am of Apollos”. He was saying, “Why are you trying to start denominations, why are you trying to be divided? There is only one gospel, the one that is lived out.” We’re one body. True unity is found in the gospel, not in human-made denominational divisions. We are united by our shared faith in Christ.

True discipleship requires self-denial. Jesus’ call to deny ourselves is a radical challenge to our egocentric nature. By surrendering our desires, ambitions, and personal agendas to Christ, we are freed to walk in God’s purpose. A true disciple of Christ belongs first and foremost to Him, beyond denomination, background, title, or tradition.

The mystery of the Gospel is the indwelling Christ. Paul’s declaration, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27), captures the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. God’s dwelling place is no longer a physical temple made with hands, but the hearts of His people.

The victory of the cross empowers us to overcome darkness and advance the Kingdom of God. This Good News cannot be confined to the four walls

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of a church. It must be preached, lived, demonstrated, and carried into the world.

The fallen nature of humanity has been redeemed. Through Christ's sacrifice, we have been restored to our original purpose: to have a deep relationship with God and dominion over the earth. This is the true gospel, a message of hope and liberation that must be shared with the world.

The church is under attack. False teachers and a watered-down gospel have infiltrated many churches, leaving believers spiritually weak and vulnerable. We must reclaim the authority given to us by Christ to resist the enemy's schemes. Jesus offers a life of abundant purpose, insurmountable joy, and peace that passes all comprehension.

And we are all called to be witnesses of this good news. Faith without works is dead. True Christianity must be dynamic, a life-transforming faith that compels us to action.

The “ego” glitch in the programming of human-nature caused by the fall of Adam has been eliminated once and for all through the victory that Jesus won over the devil. What man lost in the garden when his spirit died and consequently man was separated from his Father and Creator, was then redeemed by Christ, and returned to man when Jesus reconciled man to God. Now, that is “good news”, such as the world had never heard. And the whole world needs to hear this.

If ever the church needed this revelation, the time is now. The devil has brought his own false Christs into God's house — weak, godless preachers who speak as angels of light and turn churches into feel-good comfort zones where sin is never mentioned and people's consciences are dulled. As a result, the church is filled with hurting, withered people who do not know how to challenge Satan's invasion into their lives. Most Christians are totally unaware of the fact that they have the power and the authority to destroy the words of the devil.

So why would pastors and any Christian for that matter, keep this good news to themselves and not be full-time busy, fully dedicated to sharing this awesome revelation and mystery. And why should we divide the body of Christ into denominations that would dilute or pollute this news? That makes no sense.

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Jesus' triumph is the biggest victory ever won in the history of mankind, so big that the calendar of the entire world was adapted to this victory; a victory so important that it changed the dynamics of life itself. A victory that eliminated death and opened to every man the opportunity to live on in a kingdom of light, not only in the afterlife, but even now! Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

That victory made it possible for you to pass from death into life even while living on earth. It also appointed and empowered you to bring the Kingdom of God to others here and now. That is powerful news.

This victory repurposed and reoriented man's destiny so he could live a full and abundant life. Jesus gave us the principle: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Luke 9:24).

We cannot say we believe this Gospel unless we live it and pass it on. Faith without works is dead, and faith without witness is powerless when it stays trapped inside the walls of the church. Christianity is alive, vibrant, and bold. Anything less becomes "churchianity." Jesus said we cannot be hearers only. We must be doers. We are called to bear fruit (John 15:16), to become fishers of men (Matthew 4:19), and to pray for laborers because "the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37 to 38). This is not optional. It is a command. Jesus said that His true family are those who do the will of His Father (Matthew 12:48 to 50). And James warned that if we hear the Word but do not do it, we deceive ourselves (James 1:22 to 25).

True Christianity is true discipleship, and true discipleship is a call to join God's army. So let us put on the whole armor of God, stand firm, fight the good fight of faith, and win (Ephesians 6:13 to 16).

# Why Hold on to the Scaffoldings once the Building is Finished?



Jesus' final words on the cross were, "It is finished." The antiquated scaffoldings of the Old Law are now obsolete. His mission of reconciling humanity to God was accomplished. His sacrifice was the final sacrifice. No more need for sacrifices, no more need for the old scaffoldings to prop up the old man from his sinful nature. Christ's sacrifice redeemed man into full reunion with His Father. He restored our communion with the Father once and for all.

We are now the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. That is why there is no more need for the old temple. Paul was so excited about this revelation and declared, "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21).

God no longer lives in temples made with hands. That was in the Old Testament. God could not live in sinful man then, but the redemption-mission is done. When Jesus said, "It is finished," He was saying the re-building of the temple is done, and it only took three days. The ultimate sacrifice has been offered, and it has pleased God. And we're now His temple. We can now be fully possessed by His Holy Spirit. This is the central message of the New Testament: Christ in you, the hope of glory. The law has been superseded by the indwelling Spirit.

No wonder that on the day of Pentecost the disciples busted out in all kinds of local tongues, and spoke out the Word of God in so many different languages. The Spirit of God was free to speak and reach out with the message to everyone visiting Jerusalem in their own tongue. They were all filled with God's Spirit and He was speaking through them with boldness (Acts 2:4). This has always been God's plan: to create beings in His image

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and indwell them with His Spirit. Hallelujah! The Spirit through which Jesus did signs and wonders was now made available to all believers.

You can go ahead and shout, "I'm possessed by the living Spirit of God which gives me boldness to declare His victory." We have the light and savor to "salt" those we meet with the true meaning to life (Matthew 5:13-16). What amazing freedom we have through His Spirit (John 8:32).

The freedom we have in Christ is unparalleled. We are liberated from the constraints of our sinful nature and the burdensome demands of the law. We are free from ourselves, we're free from our own carnal feelings and emotions and from the ego glitch in the sinful nature of the old man. We're made anew. --A new creature, born of God, with God in us. Now, how cool is that! We are eternally secure, victorious, and free.

That is BIGGER than the American dream, better than Las Vegas and Cancun put together. You cannot lose for winning. You are on the winning side, forever. That is the best deal ever. --And it is FREE.

We are walking Jesus ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20)! Christ living in us. Once we get this revelation, life can never be the same again.

Here are some powerful scriptures highlighting how the law has been replaced by grace.

**Ephesians 2:8, 9** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

**Titus 3:5** Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 5:17** For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

**Romans 11:6** And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

**John 3:16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

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**Hebrews 8:12** For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

**Romans 3:20, 23** Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

**Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 3:28** Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

**Romans 5:6, 8** For when we were still without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Romans 8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

**1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Galatians 5:4** You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

**Hebrews 4:15, 16** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**John 1:17** For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

**Galatians 3:13a** Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.

# I Found Your Words



and I Ate Them

Jeremiah proclaimed, “Your words were found, and I ate them; Your words were my joy and my heart’s delight” (Jeremiah 15:16). Solomon echoed this truth when he said, “For they are life to those who find them and health to all their flesh” (Proverbs 4:22). That means there is life, strength, and health in God’s Word.

Have you ever wondered how the Word works when we read, study and meditate on it? First of all, the Word is a living substance that works in our spirits. John said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). When we are born again, the Word of God (Jesus) abides in us through the Holy Spirit, and all of that life of His permeates our spirits, our minds, hearts and bodies!

That means that the creative power that birthed the universe is at work in us as we engage with God's Word. The writer of Hebrews says that it is alive, powerful, and actually sharper than a doctor's scalpel or more accurate in probing than a psychologist's knowledge because it is a discerner of the thoughts of your heart. What that means, is that the Word essentially reads you while you read it. That is how it can cleanse and prune you (Hebrews 4:12).

The Psalmist, King David, knew how necessary it was to have the Word alive in him. See how many times he exclaimed it, “I delight to do Thy will, Thy law is within my heart” (Psalms 40:8).

“My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto Thy judgments (Word) at all times” (Psalm 119:20).

“Behold, I have longed after Thy precepts” (Psalm 119:40).

“I delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved...and I will meditate in Thy statutes” (Psalm 119:47,48).

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“I love Thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold” (Psalm 119:127).

“I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that finds great spoil (Psalm 119:162).

Paul told the Thessalonians to receive the message not as the word of men, but as the Word of God, which effectually works in those who believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13). That is why it is so important to take quality time to read and meditate on the Word. Grabbing a verse here and there may encourage you, but it will not give you the depth of strength that comes from truly feeding on the Word.

The same is true for the Word. When the Word is read, meditated upon, and received until we have “eaten to the full,” we become strengthened spiritually. We begin to live from the winning side of life. We may not fully understand how this spiritual digestion works in our spirits, but it works, just as the Word says it does.

The same is true for the Word. When the Word is read, meditated upon, and when we have “eaten to the full”, we become strengthened spiritually. We move to the "winning" side of our life. We may not understand how that “spiritual digestion” works in our spirits, but it does, just as the Word says it does.

Being faithful to “do” what we read in the Word requires meditation. Meditation is more than reading; it is reading mixed with a strong desire to absorb and exercise what you are reading. It is taking in the reading with a desire to become what it says (Hebrews 4:2). Otherwise, reading without faith and obedience remains shallow, but meditation allows the Word to take root.

Meditation is where the blessing lies: “But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:2 to 3).

All that you put into your heart will eventually govern your life. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” The heart is the command center of the inner life: the mind, will, affections, motives, and desires. Throughout Scripture, we see that the Lord searches the heart, weighs the heart, tests the heart, and exposes what is hidden within it. That is why the heart must be guarded carefully.

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So the heart must be guarded with all diligence and filled daily with the life-giving Word. Proverbs says, “Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh” (Proverbs 4:21 to 22). The Word must not merely pass before our eyes. It must penetrate deeply into the heart.

Let us be sure to get a good dose of that ENERGY-giving, thought-discerning and heart-cleansing Word every day. But remember, It ONLY works when you obey it (Hebrews 4:2).

# It's Dangerous to Neglect the Word!



The secret to discipleship is the Word. Jesus actually revealed the secret to true Christianity in John 15. He made it quite simple by saying, "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself neither can you." He also said to those who believed in Him: "If you continue in My Word, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you FREE." --Free from yourself, free from the world, free from addiction, free from the opinions of man, free to share His truth with boldness.

The Word of God is a divine blueprint, aligning our lives with the original design. It's the infallible compass, guiding us toward our God-given purpose. Within its pages, we discover the boundless wisdom, knowledge, and understanding we need to navigate life's journey. The Word instills within us the purest form of love--agape love. This selfless love empowers us to deny ourselves, to prioritize others, and to live a life of significance.

The Word is the most potent weapon in the universe, far surpassing any earthly power. It has the capacity to transform hearts, cleanse minds, and restore broken lives. It's the ultimate remedy for a world weary of superficial pleasures.

Material possessions and fleeting fame cannot truly satisfy the human soul. Jesus says so in Matthew 16:26–27. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done?"

As the poet Lord Byron lamented, even the pinnacle of worldly success left him yearning for something more. Just as our physical bodies require nourishment, so too does our spirit. The Word of God is the spiritual sustenance that strengthens and renews us daily. It enables us to grow in faith, hope, and love.

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When we neglect the Word, we weaken our spiritual vitality. We must prioritize time for daily Bible reading and meditation. By immersing ourselves in God's Word, we can overcome spiritual weakness and live a life that glorifies Him. The Word of God is the wellspring of power, victory, and life. It ignites our hearts with divine fire and illuminates our path with heavenly light. The absence of the Word, however, leads to spiritual stagnation, weakness, and darkness.

Prioritizing God's Word and Jesus Christ must be our highest aspiration, because our ultimate purpose is to love God and love others. God values His Word more than His Name itself. Therefore, we must diligently receive, believe, and obey His Word. Many Christians, weakened by neglecting the Word, succumb to the world's influence. They forget that the Word is their only source of strength, life, and power. The Word is readily available to every believer. It offers boundless wisdom, guidance, encouragement, and solutions.

The key lies in our hunger and willingness to immerse ourselves in the Word, studying, believing, and applying it to our lives. The Word is the foundation of our spiritual lives. We must rely on it as we rely on food, water, and air. Neglecting the Word is as foolish as neglecting our physical needs.

Those who have made a significant impact for the Lord have dedicated themselves to the Word. They have studied it, believed it, and lived it. To neglect the Word is to fail in our Christian walk.

Spiritual strength flows from abiding in the Word. True Christian soldiers prioritize the Word, feasting on its life-giving power. Those who cherish the Word, studying and obeying it, continue to grow and advance. In contrast, those who grow complacent in their knowledge and obedience of the Word will weaken and succumb to spiritual decline.

The Word of God is our spiritual sword, a potent weapon against the devil. Jesus Himself used the Word to defeat Satan's temptations (Matthew 4:1-10). Despite busy schedules, we must prioritize time with the Word. It is the answer to every question and the solution to every problem. It is the key to every door and the secret to every mystery.

By prioritizing the Word, we invite God's blessings into our lives. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). We must detach ourselves from worldly distractions and focus on God's Word. God's law promises prosperity,

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blessing, power and provision to those who obey it. We must treat the Word with the utmost reverence and make it an indispensable part of our lives.

Focused time should be dedicated to the Word because it is our spiritual lifeline. The enemy constantly seeks to hinder or disrupt our time with the Word. He may use familiarity or lack of hunger to weaken our commitment. Our desire, hunger, and receptivity to God's Word are crucial. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). As we prayerfully read the Word, God will guide and answer our hearts.

Our attitude towards the Word is also important. We must pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and reveal the deeper truths of the Word. While the Scribes and Pharisees knew the Scriptures, their pride and self-righteousness blinded them to the truth. When the Holy Spirit illuminates a passage, the Word comes alive. It moves from our heads to our hearts, transforming our lives. King David, who loved God's word so much said, "The entrance of Your words gives light, it gives understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:130). David, a man of the Word, found strength, life, wisdom, power, and victory in the Word.

True study involves not only reading but also listening to God. As we pause to listen to His Word, we position ourselves to receive His divine guidance. We must diligently study the Word, rightly dividing the truth (2 Timothy 2:15). By doing so, we will be rewarded with a deeper understanding and application of the Word. David declared, "Your word is better to me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psalm 119:72).

The Word has the power to transform not only our lives but also the lives of others. That's why we must embrace it, believe it, and implement it so that we may share it and reflect it with unashamed boldness. Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

Jesus emphasized the importance of seeking the Word when visiting the house of Mary and Martha, He said to Martha, "One thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet and learn from His Word. This is a vital spiritual practice.

Disrespecting the Word is an offense against God. Our faith in Jesus is directly tied to our commitment to His Word.

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Neglecting the Word will lead to spiritual decline and limited usefulness. God desires to use us, but we must remain focused on Him and His Word.

The Word separates us from the world and protects us from backsliding. Jesus said, "I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth" (John 17:14, 17). And King David also affirmed how the word of God kept him on the straight and narrow way, he said, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (Psalm 37:31).

The Word is the most powerful force in the universe, the creative force behind all things. Do not neglect the Word.

# First Love



God created man to love Him. In Deuteronomy chapter 10, the Word says, “What does the Lord your God require of you, but to love Him... with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12). God is jealous for our relationship and intimacy with Him. Why? Because He alone possesses the right values for life, and He does not want us turning to other gods and idols that will derail us. Again, in Exodus, He says, “You shall not bow down to them nor serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:5). As a good Father, He wants to protect our attention and our heart from going astray.

God desires a genuine relationship with His children. Jesus told the woman at the well that “the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23 to 24). In His final prayer before leaving His disciples, Jesus asked the Father that we would be one: one with Him, one with each other, and one with the Father. He prayed that we would share in the same deep union He had with the Father. He said, “That all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You... I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known, in order that the love You have for Me may be in them and that I Myself may be in them” (John 17:21 to 26).

Intimacy is a very important part of our relationship with Jesus and the Father. True Christianity should be a union, an intimate relationship. God does not want formalities. Jesus addressed the religious leaders of His day and said, “You nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules’” (Matthew 15:8-9). Just think... We can be as close to God as we want to be. We decide! James says, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). It is our call.

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The closer you are to someone, the more you know that person and the more intimate you are with them. --why? Because intimacy brings trust, closeness and great love, great surrender, and interdependence. It is this closeness that gives us the desire to know all about that person, without any reservation. This closeness is like a marriage, where we desire to know each other to the core. It is total acceptance and total surrender. A melding of hearts and wills.

All the essential values of discipleship are built on intimacy. “Jesus said to them, ‘You shall LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets’” (Matthew 22:37-40). Therefore, discipleship is to be a Christian to the core. No neutrality, but passion. Total oneness.

The more we meditate on God’s Word, the more we receive His love, and the more of His love we discover. Intimacy offers more and more. We can always get closer and go deeper in our relationship with God. Psalm 119 expresses the passionate love that David had for God and for his Word. He said, “My soul yearns for your laws at all times. I have opened my mouth wide; I pant for your commandments” (Psalm 119:20, 131). God called him “a man after His own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14). You can get to know God more and more deeply, and be more consumed in His love through loving His Word. So, His Word must be your first love.

And when you are filled to overflowing, you overflow on others. How? John tells us how... Because “We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for anyone who does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This command we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:19-21).

He has made Himself ever so close and available to us. Isaiah says, “As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:5). “For your Maker is your husband; the Lord of hosts is His name” (Isaiah 54:5). He has made Himself our provider, our peacemaker, our healer, comforter, guide, savior, king, protector, counselor, master, servant, light, voice, strength, breath, creator...and so many more! But he has also made himself our husband. And all of His attributes are for our benefit.

# Are His Commandments Grievous?



“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous [burdensome]”. (1 John 5:3)

Like a master artist restoring an ancient painting to its original brilliance, Jesus came to strip away the layers of rigid rules that had obscured God's true message. His words, "It has been said... but I say unto you!" rang through the temples and streets like thunder, shaking the very foundations of religious tradition. These were not just bold statements – they were spiritual dynamite, blasting through centuries of rigid interpretation.

Think of the religious leaders of His time as gatekeepers who had locked the doors to heaven with chains of rules and regulations. Jesus called them out openly, declaring, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13-14). They had turned faith into a maze of regulations where people wandered endlessly, never finding the true path to God.

But Jesus came as a spiritual revolutionary, bringing fresh water to a parched land. As John 1:17 beautifully puts it, "The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." It was like switching from black-and-white to full color – suddenly, everything was seen in its true light. The law was not meant to be a prison; it was meant to be a pathway to God's heart.

His teachings touched every corner of human existence, like rays of sunlight penetrating a dark room. He challenged conventional wisdom about money, career, relationships, family ties, and personal ambitions. Some found His words challenging, even polarizing – like a sword cutting through comfortable assumptions (Matthew 10:34). He spoke of loving our enemies, putting others first, and viewing success through heaven's eyes rather than earth's perspective.

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"Enter through the narrow gate," He taught. "For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). This was not about imposing new restrictions – it was about finding true freedom by following God's heart rather than human traditions.

Jesus' message was not just a slight adjustment to the old system; it was a complete reframing of what it means to know God. Like a master key, His teachings unlocked the door to a relationship with God based on love rather than fear, on grace rather than performance, on truth rather than tradition. His words still echo today, calling us away from empty religiosity toward a living, breathing faith that transforms hearts and lives.

Are God's commands really as demanding as they seem? When we look closer, we see these instructions reveal something deeper - they're actually showing us how God's Kingdom works. It's fascinating that John, one of Jesus' closest followers, made a bold claim in 1 John 5:1-5: "If you love me, obey my commands, and my commands are not burdensome." Think about that word "burdensome" for a second - it usually means something that weighs us down, something that's hard to carry. But John's saying the opposite happens when we love God - following His way becomes as natural as breathing.

It is like switching from junk food to a healthy diet. At first, you might miss those late-night pizza binges and sugar rushes. But as your body adjusts, you start craving the good stuff. You feel better, stronger, more alive. That is what God's commands are like – they are not restrictions, they are recipes for living our best life.

Here is what makes this even better: we are not doing this alone. God's Spirit lives in us, giving us the power to actually live this way (Romans 5:5, 8:12-13). As Peter puts it, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). It is like having a personal trainer who not only shows you what to do but also gives you the strength to do it.

Think about it this way: sin is the real burden. It is like carrying around a backpack full of rocks - it damages our relationships, messes with our minds, and keeps us from being who we are meant to be. Jesus said it straight up in John 8:34 - sin doesn't free us, it traps us.

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There is this great picture that helps explain it: imagine a dog in training. A dog that fights against every command needs constant restraint - leashes, fences, the works. But watch a well-trained dog with its owner – there is this beautiful freedom in their relationship. The dog stays close not because it has to, but because it wants to. That is what God's looking for with us - not forced compliance, but a relationship where following Him feels like the most natural thing in the world.

Let us break down some of those commands:

Have you ever had to choose between two things you deeply love? Jesus introduced one of the most challenging concepts in Christianity when He redefined what family truly means in God's kingdom. His words were striking: "He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37).

Jesus was reshaping our understanding of family ties. When told His mother and brothers were waiting outside to speak with Him, He gestured to His disciples and declared, "Only those who do the will of My Father are My brothers and sisters" (Matthew 12:50). This was not just a casual statement – it was a divine declaration that in God's kingdom, spiritual bonds transcend blood relations. Through salvation, we are grafted into a new family tree, our spiritual DNA forever altered as we're adopted into God's royal lineage.

This radical perspective becomes even clearer in one of Jesus' most startling encounters. When a man asked to first bury his father before following Him, Jesus responded with words that still challenge us today: "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60). Imagine being in that man's sandals for a moment. His request seemed like a reasonable request, doesn't it? But Jesus saw beyond cultural obligations to eternal priorities. Think about it: if you were teaching life-saving medical techniques to a thousand healthcare workers, and received news of a distant relative's funeral, what would truly serve God's purpose more? For if you were on a far-flung mission field, teaching at a convention of young pastors eager to know about dedicated discipleship, and you receive news that a relative passed away and family is urging you to come back what would be the right thing to do?

Jesus then adds another layer to this teaching: "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Like a farmer who cannot plow a straight line while looking backward,

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our spiritual journey demands forward focus. The past is like quicksand – whether it's filled with failures that haunt us or successes that tempt us to rest on our laurels, looking back can pull us under. As Paul beautifully puts it, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

At the heart of these teachings lie two foundational commandments, like two mighty pillars supporting everything else: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40). This echoes God's first commandment to Israel: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:1-2). In our modern world, these "other gods" might not be golden calves, but they're just as dangerous – social media, materialism, career success, or even family ties when placed above God.

This singular devotion extends to our relationship with wealth too. "No man can serve two masters," Jesus declared, "You cannot serve God and mammon (money)" (Matthew 6:24). Money should be like a tool in a carpenter's belt – useful for building God's kingdom, but never the object of our worship.

The culmination of these teachings leads to perhaps the most profound paradox of faith: dying to live. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). Jesus illustrated this with a powerful metaphor: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and dies, it cannot bear fruit" (John 12:24). Like a devoted mother who sets aside her own desires to nurture her child, true greatness in God's kingdom comes through servant leadership.

This self-denial is not about diminishment – it is about transformation. Just as a caterpillar must surrender its form to become a butterfly, we must surrender our old identities to embrace our new life in Christ. When we do, we do not just change our behavior; we change our very nature, becoming living testimonies of God's transforming power.

# The Radical Path: Jesus' Revolutionary Teaching on True Discipleship



Think of a compass needle, always drawn to true north. Similarly, Jesus taught that our hearts should be magnetically drawn to God above all else – even family. It is a teaching that shook His followers then and challenges us today: "He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37).

When His own mother and brothers stood outside waiting to speak with Him, Jesus seized the moment to redefine family altogether. Gesturing to His disciples, He declared, "Only those who do the will of My Father are My brothers and sisters" (Matthew 12:50). This was not just a casual statement – it was a spiritual revolution. When we enter God's kingdom, we are not just joining a club; we are being adopted into a new bloodline, where our connection to fellow believers runs deeper than DNA.

Consider the man who asked to bury his father before following Jesus. The response seems harsh at first: "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60). Imagine a doctor with the cure for cancer leaving a thousand patients waiting while attending to a minor scrape – that is the perspective Jesus was highlighting. Our primary mission is offering eternal life to those spiritually dying.

"No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Picture a farmer trying to plow straight lines while constantly looking over his shoulder – it is impossible. The same applies to our spiritual journey. Whether it is guilt from past failures or nostalgia for former glory days, looking back can pull us off course. As Paul

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reminded the Corinthians, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Like a symphony that requires perfect harmony between instruments, Jesus distilled life's complexities into two fundamental notes: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40). This echoes God's first commandment: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:1-2). In today's world, our modern idols might not be golden calves, but they're just as dangerous – materialism, endless entertainment, career obsession – all competing for the throne of our hearts.

Jesus' wisdom on wealth and priorities cuts like a surgeon's knife: "No man can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Money should be like a good servant, not a cruel master. When it becomes our deity, we have lost our way.

The path of true discipleship requires what might seem counterintuitive: death to self. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). Just as a seed must die to produce fruit (John 12:24), our self-centered nature must yield to bear spiritual fruit. Look at a devoted mother – her "death to self" in serving her child does not diminish her; it transforms her into something more beautiful. When we empty ourselves of self-importance, we become vessels through which God's love can flow most purely.

Picture yourself as a judge, gavel in hand, ready to pass sentence – but wait. Jesus challenges our natural inclination to judge others with a masterful metaphor: "Why do you behold the mote that is in your brother's eye, but don't consider the beam that is in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3). It is like trying to perform eye surgery while being partially blind yourself. His warning, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1), is not just about being nice – it is about recognizing our own flawed perspective. We often rank sins like items on a menu, but in God's eyes, sin is sin, whether it's a white lie or a major transgression.

Here is another one: Imagine a lighthouse keeper deciding to cover his beacon on a stormy night. Absurd, right? That's exactly Jesus' point when He declares, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14-15). When you have experienced God's

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transformative power – His truth, love, peace, and joy – hiding it is like hoarding a cure during a pandemic. Our lives should be living testimonies that cause others to "see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

In our social media age, where likes and followers often dictate our worth, fear can be like chains that bind us, but Jesus offers a profound perspective shift, cutting right through the noise: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). It is like being so worried about a critic's review that you forget you're performing for the King. As Proverbs reminds us, "The fear of man brings a snare: but whoso puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (29:25). When we are consumed by others' opinions, we are like a ship that has abandoned its compass.

Speaking of social validation, Jesus' warning about universal praise is particularly relevant today: "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:26). Think of it as a spiritual red flag – if everyone's applauding, you might be performing for the wrong audience. Paul reinforces this in Galatians 6:3: "For if a man thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Those Instagram likes and Twitter hearts? They are as substantial as morning mist.

Jesus poses a question that strips away all pretense: "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Imagine trading your eternal inheritance for temporary treasures – it is like selling a priceless masterpiece for monopoly money. That is the foolishness of prioritizing worldly success over spiritual wealth. Peter urges us to "gird up the loins of your mind" (1 Peter 1:13), while Paul challenges us to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

And here is the beautiful paradox: in this kingdom that calls us to swim against society's current, we are given supernatural courage. We are not left alone in overcoming our difficulties. As Paul reminds us, God has not given us "a spirit of timidity, but of love, power, and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7). In God's kingdom, fear dissolves in the light of perfect love. We can declare with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:6).

Standing for Christ in a world that often stands against Him is not easy. Standing firm in faith means sometimes standing alone in a crowd. That is why Jesus warned, "Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words, of

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him shall the Son of man be ashamed" (Luke 9:26). He is calling us to an authenticity that values eternal approval over temporary acceptance. It is about living with such conviction that our lives themselves become a testimony, even when our words might be met with resistance.

We have gone over 20 different commandments and teachings of Jesus which originally appeared stringent and burdensome. And throughout the Gospels, we discover more of the distinct commandments and principles, and there are countless more throughout all the books of the Bible waiting to be uncovered. Like treasure hunters guided by the Holy Spirit, we are invited to dig deeper into Jesus' words and the apostles' teachings. These precious gems of wisdom often lie just beneath the surface, waiting for those who seek them with sincere hearts.

Picture a master craftsman carefully laying out his tools - each one with a specific purpose, each designed to create something beautiful. That is exactly what Jesus did with His teachings. He did not just give us random rules; He provided us with a masterful blueprint for living.

Think of Jesus' parables as intricate puzzle boxes - they do not just open at first glance. They reveal their treasures to those who truly hunger for righteousness, those who take time to turn them over in their minds and hearts. It is no coincidence that Jesus chose to teach this way. These stories unfold like blooming flowers, revealing layer after layer of truth to those who earnestly seek understanding.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). This is not just another guideline – it is the master key that unlocks everything else. Jesus was revolutionizing our priorities, turning our worldly understanding upside down.

One of the most beautiful aspects of Jesus' teachings is their gentle nature. Far from being burdensome, they offer rest to weary souls. As He promised, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). These are not just words – they are an invitation to experience peace that defies human understanding.

Think of these commandments as guardrails on a mountain road - they do not restrict our journey; they protect us and guide us to our destination. They liberate us from the world's distorted wisdom and false teachings. Jesus was not establishing a prison of rules; He was providing a pathway to freedom. As

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He declared, "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

These teachings are like keys that unlock the chains of darkness that once bound us. They realign our spiritual compass, pointing us toward what truly matters. When Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32), He was offering us a passport to true freedom.

Consider discipline not as a harsh taskmaster but as a skilled mentor. Just as an athlete's training transforms their abilities, spiritual discipline shapes our character. It's a beautiful progression:

Discipline becomes habit

Habits form lifestyle

Lifestyle molds character

Character determines destiny

Here is the thing; It all starts with your thoughts – they are basically the first domino in the chain reaction of your life. Those thoughts turn into the stuff you say. Then before you know it, you are acting on those words. Do something enough times, and boom – you have got yourself a habit. And those habits are literally building who you are, piece by piece. And at the end of the day, the person you become is what shapes your whole life story. So, maybe we should pay attention to what is going on in our heads!

When we strip away religious formality, we are left with something beautifully simple: walking in our new identity as obedient citizens to the overall discipline of God's kingdom. Obedience makes discipleship so simple. Like immigrants receiving

# Define Discipleship



A true Christian disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ, committed to learning from Him, obeying His teachings, and living a life that reflects His character. As Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Those who do the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21).

A disciple's life is marked by a transformation of desires, motives, and goals, aligning them with God's Word and His will. Christian discipleship is a radical departure from the world's lifestyle. Jesus prayed, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:15-16). We are not only students of God's Word, but followers of the discipline of Christ; meaning that we are practicing and living out His teachings. Again, to be a disciple of Jesus is not only adhering to a set of beliefs, but a lifestyle to reflect the teachings of Jesus wherever we go.

By surrendering our lives to Christ, we allow Him to live through us. Our life is no longer our own. To put it bluntly, we are dead. We no longer belong to ourselves. As Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:24). This requires a complete self-denial, a dying to self so that Christ may live in us. Paul expressed this truth, saying, "I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). A disciple's life is characterized by total commitment to Jesus, not merely hearing His Word but actively doing it. James said, "brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead". (James 2:14-23)

This may be a hard saying for some, but there's more to Christianity than church-going. We don't gauge Christianity by the number of don'ts in our life, but rather by the number of do's in obedience to the standard of discipleship that Jesus gave us.

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True discipleship involves not only knowing God's Word but also practicing it. If we are not actively obeying God's Word, we risk becoming mere hearers, not doers. As Jesus warned, those who hear but do not do are like foolish builders whose houses collapse (Matthew 7:24-27). He also declared, "Whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33). So obedience is the cornerstone of Christian faith. James warns against a faith that is merely intellectual, without action. True faith is evidenced by works. A disciple's life is marked by practical application of God's Word, such as sharing the gospel, caring for the needy, and healing the sick.

A disciple is called to proclaim the good news of salvation and demonstrate God's love through acts of compassion and kindness. We are also empowered to overcome the works of the devil and bring healing and deliverance to those who are oppressed.

We cannot let the Gospel stop with us; we must pass on the good news. Christianity is more than a good set of morals. It is a lifestyle of giving and sharing and loving. Paul exhorts us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, conforming to God's perfect will. That is where our Christianity should start, a daily living sacrifice, that we may be the proof of God's will (or destiny) for our life.

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Let us take a few minutes to read and meditate on these verses below. They spell out what is required of a Christian disciple.

**John 13:35** By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

**Matthew 6:24** No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

**Matthew 10:36-38** A man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

**Matthew 19:29** Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

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**Mark 10:21** Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.

**Luke 9:62** No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

**1 Corinthians 6:20** For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

**2 Corinthians 5:14a** For the love of Christ compels us.

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

Philippians 3:7-8 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

**Ephesians 6:6** Not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

**2 Timothy 2:3** You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

**1 Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

**Luke 9:23-24** Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

**Matthew 22:14** For many are called, but few are chosen.

**1 Corinthians 11:1** Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

**Matthew 23:11** But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

**John 15:16** You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

# Win the War in Your Mind First



The enemy's war against us takes place in our mind and emotions. The devil knows that nothing can be done about our born-again spirit since it already belongs to Jesus and is dedicated to Him. So, he uses our minds to control our thoughts and emotions with lies. Jesus said of Satan, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). His goal is to get our mind off of our potential in Christ and off the promises of God, through those mental attacks.

In our new man, "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). When using the Word of God, we can go to war against the enemy's attacks on our mind and learn to replace the lies with the truths of God. It says in Hebrews, "For the word of God is alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Neuroscientists have discovered that our mind cannot handle evil thoughts. He proves that we were created to think on the things of God. When we think evil thoughts, whether in anger, bitterness, jealousy or unforgiveness, our mind cannot process these thoughts properly and we end up destroying what we are trying to build. The Apostle Paul said, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, (ONLY) think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Satan cannot do anything to you without your consent. He can only use your power of choice; and he does so by mixing a little bit of truth to get your attention and then when you listen to that, he floods you with lies. That is why it is important to get filled up with the Word so you can discern the attacks on your mind. The Apostle Paul said, "Neither give place to the devil"

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(Ephesians 4:27). “For we are not unaware of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

The battle is between our old nature and our new nature. It is a daily conflict between God’s plan for us and our own plan, and it requires discipline of our thoughts. Again, Paul says “And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled” (2 Corinthians 10:5,6). One of Satan’s favorite devices is compromise, to get you to choose the more comfortable approach, the easier way. He makes complacency appealing. That is why we must “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Most of our bad habits are centered around compromise and comfort. Complacency is the enemy of progress and victory. Paul said, “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13). That is why we have to reevaluate our wrong habits, whether they be physical or emotional. James said, “Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Satan plays with our emotions and tries to make us live out carnal emotions. But God gives us the power to rearrange our thoughts. Paul spells it out clearly: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Romans 8:5-7).

We must first win the battle in our own mind. We must be willing to discipline ourselves to be more Christ-like. We gym our body but we forget to gym our mind. The Apostle Paul said, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

It is only by your mind being renewed by the Word of God that you can truly change your character. Your mind is renewed to the degree that the Word of God dictates your behavior. Solomon said, “My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are LIFE to those who find them, and HEALTH to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:20-23).

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Renewing your mind means thinking on the things of God during your whole day, and disciplining your life according to what the Word says. If it sounds to you like it is mind control, it's exactly right; It is more than that, it is brain-washing. But the alternative is brain pollution, “garbage in, garbage out”; so you choose. The mind is the battle ground and we have to be militant to keep it subject to the Word of God. Paul told the Corinthians, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds (mindsets), casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

That is what renewing our mind is about. It is the effort of disciplining our thoughts to fall in line with the principles and the laws of God. Again, Paul explains it, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

We are in a spiritual warfare. And the key to staying in the Spirit and staying free from the attacks of the devil on our thoughts is to keep our mind aligned with the Word of God. Believe it or not, it can be quite simple, all you have to do is answer the lies with the truth of God. “When the Enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard (God's Word) against him” (Isaiah 59:19). “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind“ (2 Timothy 1:7). Just commit to keep your thoughts captive so that your mind does not wander all over the place. Give no place to the devil.

# Control Your Emotions



"For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:6-8).

Renewing your mind, does not ONLY mean to discipline your thoughts, it includes your emotions. The Good News Translation says, "To be controlled by our human nature (which includes your fleshly emotions and your carnal reasoning) results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace. Those who obey their human nature cannot please God" (Romans 8:6, 8).

We need to learn to control our emotions, otherwise our emotions will control us. Have you met people who are just entirely controlled by their emotional tantrums? They are in constant turmoil, they are stressed, unstable and temperamental (90% temper and 10% mental).

**Proverbs 14:12** says, "There is a way that appears to be right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." The way you feel can easily lead you in the wrong direction.

Remember, before being born-again, you had a different nature, that of the old man, born of Adam. And the emotions we lived by before were earthly and sensual. James explains this very well. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:3-17).

The devil really uses those emotions of the old man to try to control you. He will use fear, discontentment, worry and resentment, pride, envy, unforgiveness, you name it... if you don't control your emotions, you will be

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manipulated by your moods. "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (NIV)

God cannot rule your life if emotions rule your life. If you make decisions based on how you feel, then you have made your feelings your god, and then God cannot be God in your life...

Many people have ruined their reputation because of something said in anger. Or missed a job opportunity because of their lack of self-control? "(People) will die for lack of discipline and instruction, and in the greatness of their folly they will go astray and be lost." (Proverbs 5:23 AMP)

When you choose to follow Jesus, that decision includes yielding your emotions to the discipline of the Word. And the Word of God says that you died with Christ. The old man and his emotions is dead. It is Christ who lives in you. And we must all learn to yield to the Holy Spirit. And Paul says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law." (Gal 5:22-23) These are the NEW EMOTIONS we've been given in the new birth.

Jesus wants to be Lord of how you feel, not just what you think and do. Peter said, "That you no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2).

God gave us a very simple solution to this dilemma... OBEEDIENCE. Obedience is nothing more than yielding your will to His. "If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32). That is right, free from your old sin nature and its pride, free from egotism and temper tantrums. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). To put it in plain English, that means that if we are not willing to deny ourselves, we cannot be His disciple. The key is to deny yourself; meaning your selfish, self-centered old man.

If we follow the guidelines of the Word of God, the old emotions lose their place of control. We begin to emulate Jesus, and that includes His emotional life. When you read the Gospels, you see how Jesus responded to people, pressure, temptation, injustice, and need. You begin to understand His

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compassion, His courage, His grief, His righteous anger, and His passion for a lost world that needed to be redeemed.

We must love Christ more than our own life. We must be willing to lay down our lives for Him, not only in martyrdom if necessary, but daily, by denying the feelings and impulses of the old man and taking on our new identity in Christ. That new identity operates by the law of love. Either we remain slaves to the old sin nature, or we become servants of Christ, walking in obedience to His teachings.

Here are some powerful verses that confirm our need to live according to the new identity Christ has given us:

**Luke 9:24-25** "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."

**Galatians 5:24-25** "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to His cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives."

**Ephesians 4:22-24** "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

**Colossians 3:10** "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

**2 Corinthians 5:17** "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

**Romans 6:1-6** "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly also be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

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For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

**Romans 13:14** "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh."

# True Conversion Has To Lead To Discipleship



The notable theologian Gordon Fee said, “Only disciples are true converts.” In other words, if salvation does not lead to discipleship, it was not truly conversion. Jesus has to become Lord.

We try every excuse to keep us from obeying Christ. Jesus covered many of those excuses in the parable of the supper when people refused to come, once invited (Luke: 16-24). We say, “Well, I can’t really follow Jesus because I have children now.” But should family really keep us from being committed to Jesus? Rather, it should be an incentive. Should lack of comfort be an excuse for not following Jesus? Thinking, oh I could never live in Africa... Well, we lived in Africa very comfortably, even more so than in the USA or Canada. Or should old age be an issue? Linda and I are in our mid-seventies, but we are not retired, we’re re-fired! “His mercies are new every morning” (Lamentations 3:22-23). And “my youth is renewed like the eagle’s!” (Psalm 103:5) and “those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:31). Plus, where is retirement in the Bible? Moses was still strong at 120 years of age, and Joshua went into the promised line as a commander-in-chief at 80 years of age. We refuse to entertain thoughts that would limit God.

Back to the subject of conversion, Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Matthew 13:45-46). This message of discovering the greatest truth and letting go of what no longer matters, is all throughout the New Testament. (You cannot serve two masters, seek first the kingdom, no man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, the woman who lost her coin and swept the entire house to find it, etc.)

Jesus said, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug

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deep and laid the foundation on the rock.” (Luke 6:46). He is virtually saying, “You are only a solid believer, if you obey what I say.”

Most people think that making a decision to be a believer in Christ is enough, but in actuality, that initial decision is called “enlistment”. It is the same as raising your hand and committing to join the army and turning your life around. That original decision is when you volunteer to enlist in a fight for truth and freedom. At that point, you become a soldier. And as a soldier you go by a set of disciplines. When you join the army, you obey its commands. There is not an army in this world that would tolerate its soldiers not to follow commands.

Discipleship is enlisting in the service of God’s army. Jesus’ call to be a follower means to walk the same path as He walked. Following Him means to imitate Him. Paul said to Timothy, “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” (2 Timothy 2:4). So discipleship has to be total obedience to Christ.

Ours is an army for love, but nonetheless an army. Look at what Jesus said repeatedly:

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” (John 14:21).

“You are My friends if you do what I command you.” (John 15:14).

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15).

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” (John 15:10).

“The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” (1 John 2:4).

“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.” (1 John 2:3).

“And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.” (2 John 1:6).

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And even when Jesus sent out His disciples, He said, “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” (Matthew 28:29). We are not called to be believers, but disciples and disciplers. We are called to follow His discipline, in order to be like Him. I do not quite understand how we miss this message. It probably comes from the “sinner’s prayer” which incidentally, is not in the Bible. It is not all to invite Jesus into our heart. Jesus said, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God has come to you.” means let go of your world and seek first the Kingdom of God. Repent means “metanoia”, a complete turn around. Turn from the world and make Jesus your Lord and Commander in chief; and seek first, meaning live out the kingdom with all that is within you. It cannot be a slight change of plans.

Even when Jesus first called His disciples, He said, “Follow me and I’ll make you fishers of men.” –Not once a week, but full-time and full-on disciples! --Disciples that are trained to obey commands and live their lives in the image of Christ and willing to teach others also.

I am sorry they did not give you the whole picture when you were recruited. Recruiters do not always give you the full picture about the responsibility and accountability, but rather just the benefits. But Jesus did not hide the cost. In fact, He made it clear when He told the crowds following Him, “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he has sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” (Luke 14:27-30).

Only disciples are true converts. --Why? Because it is an ongoing lifestyle of choosing Him and forsaking all to follow Him. To keep His commands means consistent obedience. Why call him ‘Lord, Lord’, if we are not going to do what He’s called us to do? Have we not found that one pearl? –The pearl of a great price. And are we not willing to put everything on the line in order to buy that field? Is the kingdom not worth far above everything else?

Faith is not a simple mental consent, faith means complete reliance on God. You have got to let go of the world. Faith cannot work unless you let go of the world. Jesus said so: “Unless you forsake all that you have...” So do not be afraid to pay the price. That pearl is worth so much more. That is discipleship.

# Living Holy!



When we are born again, it is not just a new beginning; it is a radical transformation of our inner being.

Our spirit that once was dead in sin, is now alive in Christ. As Colossians 3:3 puts it, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." But the journey does not stop there. While our spirit is renewed, our minds, emotions, and our physical bodies still need to align with this new identity. Romans 12:2 urges us, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will."

We still have to control our mind and our will and emotions along with our body. So, while we have a born-again spirit and are empowered through Christ in spirit, we have to make our soul (mind, will and emotions) and our body line up with our spirit. "Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1,2).

The Bible calls it mortifying the flesh, living holy, living sanctified, separated unto God. In the first part of the book of Romans, Paul takes quite a bit of time explaining the death of the old law, how the old testament is done away with, along with the old man. In parallel to that, he also elaborates on the birth of the new man, when we were resurrected with Christ when he rose from the dead. Starting in Romans 6, he then goes after the soul and the body and how those two need to fall in line with the new identity. "We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing (done away), so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin" (Romans 6:6,7).

There is an awesome exchange that took place when Jesus died on the cross. Here are the many benefits of that exchange:

Jesus was punished so that we might be forgiven.

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Jesus was wounded so that we might be healed.

Jesus was made sin with our sinfulness, that we might be made righteous with His righteousness.

Jesus died our death, that we might share His life.

Jesus was made a curse, that we might receive the blessing.

Jesus endured our poverty, that we might share His abundance.

Jesus bore our shame, that we might share His glory.

Jesus endured our rejection, that we might have His acceptance.

Our old man died in Jesus, that the new man might live in us.

So we must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. The old man is dead, so, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members (of the body) to sin as instruments for unrighteousness but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:11-14).

What he is saying is that we must conform our body and soul to obey the new identity of the newborn spirit. Holy and acceptable unto God. "Holiness" means living transformed, "separated unto God"; we must submit our body and soul to the will of God. And "acceptable unto God" means well-pleasing to God. Unfortunately, because we were born in the kingdom of darkness, our minds, our will, our emotions, and our bodies default to bad habits. Unclean habits corrupt the spirit. There lies the war between the soul and the spirit. Paul says, the "The carnal mind is enmity to God" (Romans 8:7,8).

Through the cross we receive deliverance:

From this present evil age.

From the law,

From self,

From the flesh,

From the world.

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Most of the promises of God are given to us in the past tense. In other words, it is already done. But unless we appropriate the promises by faith, we may never receive them. I've heard people say, "I got it all when I was saved". That's true but where is it all? Legally, once you are saved and born again, you are an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. Everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to you. But you do not possess it until you appropriate it. You have to distinguish between the legal and the experiential. In fact, I doubt whether there is anybody who has actually appropriated in experience all that Jesus provided through his death on the cross. Hebrews 10:14 says "for by one sacrifice he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified".

So, legally, everything that Jesus did on the cross is for us. But the war between our flesh and our spirit is real. Our minds, filled with worldly desires, often pull us away from God's perfect will. As Romans 8:7 says, "The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." To overcome this battle, we must renew our minds with God's Word. In John 15:3, Jesus promises, "Now you are clean through the word I have spoken to you." The Holy Spirit empowers us, but we must cooperate with Him by actively choosing to think God's thoughts and live a godly lifestyle.

In the Christian life, God will do certain miracles to bring you in. After that, you only get what you appropriate. And if you do not fight for it, you do not get it. It is part of the whole process. We can not just fold our arms and say it's all ours unless we appropriate it. The checks are already signed and assigned to you, but you gotta walk to the bank to cash them in. You see, we can have possessions that we have never possessed. You can receive inheritance that you never got, because you did not go get it. If you look at the church portrayed in the New Testament and in the book of Acts, and look at the church as it has been through the centuries, you would have to say there is very little correspondence between them. Why? Because in order to appropriate the inheritance, you have to obey and believe.

Faith is essential. Hebrews 11:6 says, "but without faith it is impossible to please him". So, it is no use trying to please God without faith because it is impossible. For the one who comes to God must believe. And he must believe two things: that God exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Now most people believe that God exists. But it's not enough. You have got to believe that if you diligently seek God and go after His promises through faith and obedience, he will reward you.

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Notice what it says in Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?". The pinnacle of God's love for humanity is the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. This act of love, the most precious and selfless act in the universe. If God was willing to give up His own Son, then surely, He will withhold nothing else from those who believe. And we do not have to do anything more, we do not have to pay anymore, there is no extra charge, it is a gift; "graciously give us ALL things".

But you look carefully through the Bible and try to find anywhere where it speaks well of laziness. I do not believe there is one good word said about laziness in the entire Bible. The Bible condemns drunkenness, but it condemns laziness far more severely than drunkenness. Hence, the need to stay on the war-path spiritually.

Most battles in the life of a believer are caused by the bad habits of the mind and of the body. That is what we brought out when talking about using two different identities. One foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom. It cannot work. Jesus Himself emphasized the importance of self-discipline. In Matthew 5:29, He said, "If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell." This radical statement underscores the need to eliminate anything that hinders our spiritual growth. Jesus was graphically explaining the importance of keeping every member of your body in subjection to your new identity. That means that any part of your body or mind that the devil has control over through addiction, you must be willing to gouge it out.

There is an app for this; it's called fasting. When you first, you subjugate the body to the obedience of the spirit. You are telling the old man, "Listen buddy, you are no longer in charge. Christ in me is at the steering wheel, so move over and obey my new identity in Christ". We are called to develop strong habits that will contribute to our spiritual health.

We must strive for holiness, which means total devotion to God. It is about living with integrity, aligning our thoughts, words, and actions with God's Word. Romans 6:12-14 says, "Therefore do not let sin reign (as king) in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of

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yourself to Him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace."

Remember, God is holy and cannot have fellowship with unrighteousness. We are made righteous in Christ, but it is best when we show it. That's why we must live holy, separated and devoted unto God and make our mind/emotions, and bodies fall in line with the disciplines of a disciple. "holiness", or to be holy, means total devotion to God. Close to this word, is the word "integrity", which means having strong moral principles; or being true, through and through! As we are renewed in mind, body and spirit, our 'holy' nature develops integrity of character, which leads us to greater loyalty to living the Word of God.

Paul puts it clearly in Romans 8:13: "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live," Notice that you are the one who must put to death the deeds (habits) of the body. You must discipline the mind and the flesh.

Paul goes on to say, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father'" (Romans 12:14).

Let us take some time to go over our character, our inner self, and look into the different habits and thought patterns that we entertain to see if they fall in line with the Word of God. If not, let us commit to disciplining our mind and our body according to the "discipline of a disciple". Gym in the Spirit.

Surely, we understand the need to discipline our bodies to stay in shape and healthy. For us to live holy, we have to discipline every area of our life according to the teachings of Jesus. It can be a real challenge to go to the gym every day, but once you do, you never regret it.

Notice that Jesus did not abolish the old law in the sense that we do not have to obey the ten commandments. To the contrary, He raised the bar! One example is when He told us that adultery can be committed even in our thoughts. "But I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). So, that ought to take care of porn addiction. And He went on to say that being angry at your brother can be as bad as murder. "Whoever hates his brother is

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a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). So, that ought to take care of bitterness and unforgiveness.

So, our every thought, our every habit has to be revisited to make sure that they fall in obedience to the teachings of Christ. It even goes further than that. Even our own convictions have to be revisited. To stand up for Christ, you also have to clarify what you stand against. The opinions of man that contradict the Word of God can influence us a great deal. Here are some specific areas in our life that we must revisit:

**Money:** Materialists measure their success by wealth. But that is not God's view. We did not bring anything into the world, and we would not take anything out of it. We were made for more than just things. “Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15).

**Self-indulgence:** “Whatever feels good must be good.” Pleasure can easily become a god. Comfort and fun can be very appealing, however, holiness creates true joy and happiness. “Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit” (Galatians 6:8).

**Politics:** Politics can be like a form of religion for people who do not know God. They put their hope and trust in the government to solve all of their problems, meet all of their needs, give them all of their answers and protect them! Being part of the Lord's Kingdom, He takes care of everything! “My God shall supply all of your (our) needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:10). And “Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

The pervasive corruption in our institutions, the breakdown of education, the chaos in government, the division within the Church, the fracturing of families, and the inner turmoil we experience—these are all signs of a society drifting from God's intended path. When we disregard God's Word and His guidance, we reap the consequences. As Deuteronomy 5:32-33 warns, “Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today. Do not turn aside from it to the right or to the left. Walk in the way the Lord your God commands you, so that you may live, prosper, and live long in the land.”

To effectively challenge these prevailing worldviews and defend God's truth, we must first live a holy life and be devoted to the Lord, His Word, His ways, and His values.

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# Steadfast And Unmovable



“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Steadfast means immovable, relentless, faithful unto the end, standing firm in faith, holding onto the truth, fixed, enduring, committed, devoted, dedicated, dependable, resolute, and unwavering. These qualities could all describe an outstanding warrior, and yet the Bible applies this kind of language to the disciple of Jesus.

The life of a disciple is not always easy. It is a life of battle, difficulty, endurance, and hardship. We are at war, not against people, but against the powers of darkness. A disciple lives like a warrior who represents the Kingdom faithfully and relentlessly, someone who can be depended upon and who remains faithful unto the end. Paul described this life with words like wrestling, warfare, armor, and standing.

Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10 to 17:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”

Peter also admonishes us to stand steadfast in the faith, resisting the enemy of our souls. He writes, “Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the

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same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5:9).

But what is the war actually about? If Jesus has won the victory, if He is the Name above every name and every knee must bow to Him, why is there still a war?

First we must understand that there are two kingdoms, ever since the garden of Eden. The kingdom of Light controlled by God and the kingdom of darkness, through which the devil, Satan, gains accessible power through man. Christ disarmed Satan and paid that death penalty through the cross for those who believe and we were brought back into full fellowship with the Father. Paul explains, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Romans 10:4) It means Christ paid the price for our righteousness for as long as we accept His sacrifice as the ransom for our sin-nature.

However, it is not the end of the law in every sense. It says "for righteousness". Grace has replaced the law as a means for us to obtain righteousness with God. But the law still exists. It still condemns those who aren't born again.

Remember also that Jesus said that He came to fulfill the law. He even raised the bar of the law by showing the spirit of the law so that we no longer obey the law through legalism (hoping to have enough "points" to discount the judgment we deserve), but rather, from the heart.

Our spirit is redeemed. Satan cannot do anything about the fact that our spirit is born-again. However, Satan continues to attack us in so many ways, but for the most part in the mind through fear, guilt, condemnation, confusion, worry, etc. He's the accuser of the saints.

But Paul explains how our war is a spiritual war. He says, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish devilish strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). Those strongholds are in the mind. They are prejudices and preconceived ideas in the minds of men. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." --Why? Because God doesn't like these people? No. But because they trust in themselves.

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Here are the main "distractions" that man goes after, which the apostle John refers to: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16)

1. wealth
2. nobility or social position
3. education (knowledge, science)
4. power
5. religion
6. Sexuality

In the garden, when the devil told Adam and Eve that if they should eat of the fruit of knowledge, he told them, "You shall be like God." (Genesis 3:5) Now, there's nothing really wrong with wanting to be like God; we all want to be like God. But Satan's insinuation was, "And you will not need God. You will be independent, better yet, you'll be self-dependent. You won't be a slave to God". That is basically the same dialogue that you have in your mind when you decide to compromise from adhering to the principles and values that you know are true. The devil tells you, "You can be your own decision maker, you don't need those Godly principles and values, ...you're big enough, be your own boss". But without realizing it, we became slaves to our ego, slaves to our own philosophy, trying to be good enough, and to lift ourselves up with our own bootstraps. We now compare ourselves with the other guy, who happens to also be a self-centered sinner. This is really the root of sin: self-reliance and self-dependence.

And there lies the war between self-dependence (the devil's plan) and God-dependence (grace). Grace brings you in direct relationship with God through intimacy and dependence on God. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." (Titus 3:5)

The key verse about Jesus' ministry is, "I do nothing of My Own, I only do what the Father tells Me" (John 5:30). Jesus was totally dependent on the Father. Total dependence on God leads to righteous living. We are already made righteous in the Spirit, but living holy comes through obedience, full-on dependence, full-on intimacy. (John 15)

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So the key to winning the war in the Spirit is to be steadfast to our faith in Christ. And instead of relying on our own strength and ability to fight the enemy, we must hide ourselves in our new identity, belonging to Christ, because He has already won the war. The devil cannot touch you for as long as you fully put on the identity of Christ. You are hidden in Christ. Colossians 3:3 says, "You died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

# In The "Mean" Time!



After we have prayed, there is often a time of waiting. And that time is a testing time. It is the "waiting room" of God, and many prayers are discarded during that time.

After desperate prayer, what should be your stance of faith in the meantime? We call it "meantime". It is rather fitting because for most of us, that time period is rather "mean" and lean, it is difficult. It is when your head is flooded with those doubts, thinking, "Oh well, God did not answer. There may be something in me that God's not pleased with." If the devil can get you to doubt during that time, he has got you defeated.

But remember, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is the most important ingredient in prayer. Faith is a stance. It perseveres. It takes a position and refuses to move in any other direction. Hebrews says faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It is the conviction that what you are expecting from God is in His hands. So during the meantime, when the waiting feels difficult, it is time to stand in faith and begin praising as though you have already received the answer.

That meantime is no different from the season when a farmer waits for the harvest after planting seed. It is also like a mother expecting a child after conception. Many prayers are answered by the principle of seed, time, and harvest (Mark 4:26 to 29). In fact, many of God's promises operate this way. God established this rhythm after the flood when He said, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22).

Doubt and worry will negate your prayers. When you worry, you are as good as telling God, "I don't believe it will happen!" It is like the farmer taking the seed out of the ground to see if it is working! --It just kills the process. That is why there's that God-given recipe, "seed, time and harvest". The "time" part in the recipe is usually spelled like this: "T-I-I-I-M-E".

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Because it takes a fair bit of time for an acorn to become a tree. It takes time for a seed to become a fully developed baby.

We can easily confuse a "miracle" for a "blessing". Miracles are God's merciful answers to solve a problematic situation that either has to be solved immediately or in no other way. A miracle is like a 991 call, an emergency. But blessings basically operate from the "seed" principle. You plant and with time the harvest will come.

Miracles usually happen quickly. But if there is another way that God could answer your prayer, He will usually choose the longer process, because it exercises our faith, our trust and our patience. And that's what He loves the most. God's grace abounds in our thankfulness and praise.

Complaining and begging in prayer, or spelling out all of our woes and troubles will not do much. Why? For two obvious reasons: for one if it is not faith, It just will not please God and secondly, God dwells in our praises. Praise is the voice of faith. And, once you have poured out your heart in prayer to the Father on a topic, that "prayer request" should be moved to your praise list. Just thank and praise Him for the answer, knowing fully in faith that the harvest of your sowing is on its way.

Too many of us are God's fair weather friends. When everything is going good, we love and trust God. But when things are not going our way, then we stop looking to God, we stop trusting, and we stop praying. We switch to the "arm of the flesh" and try to make things happen without the help of God. We use God as the spare wheel instead of the steering wheel.

The way some of us pray is, "God give me patience, and I want it right now!" We are used to microwave dinners and fast food, powdered orange juice, and we want God to "fastlane" our answers. Waiting makes us feel we're not in control, and we don't like it.

What is sad about those who cannot stand to be in the "waiting room" is they suffer from anxiety, they live their life often frustrated, their to-do list is more important than family, they neglect time with their children, they have a short temper, and the list goes on... Ask me, how I know...

Most of life is waiting. Waiting for an appointment to see the doctor. Waiting to be accepted in college, waiting for your first job offer, waiting to see if the bank will give you a loan, waiting for the right time to start a family, waiting for your test scores, waiting for your loved ones to come to

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Christ, waiting for the Lord to bring the right man or the right woman into your life, waiting for someone to buy your house, waiting for your prayers to be answered, waiting for your husband to come home from a business trip, waiting, waiting and waiting some more.

Waiting is probably one of the hardest parts of the Christian life. But it is also one of the keys to growing in God's Kingdom. Waiting appears throughout the Bible. Many of God's promises in the Old Testament required waiting. Think of Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, Daniel, David, and the children of Israel in the wilderness. One of my favorite verses on waiting states its great benefits: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). There are four promises right there: renewed strength, rising higher than before, running without weariness, and walking without fainting.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who've not seen and yet believe." Right there is the secret and the rule of prayer. We can't go by seeing, we must go by faith...by believing. So, while you wait, learn to rejoice right there and then, start praising before seeing. "He that comes to God must believe that He is [God] and that He is the rewarder of those who [earnestly] believe." (Hebrews 11:6).

When you order something online, you do not get it right away, sometimes it takes weeks before it arrives. Yet, you are already rejoicing. You are all happy about it, because you know it's on its way. Adopt the same principle, once you have prayed. Start praising. Whatever you do, do not lose faith, while in God's waiting room. Your answer is coming. Jesus said, "Believe when you pray." (Mk 11:24). Not just when you see the answer; that requires no faith. Believe when you pray and never stop believing and praising Him for the answer. That is the secret to answered prayers.

# The WILES of the Devil



"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6:10-17)

What are those "wiles" of the devil? If you are born again, the attacks of the devil against you are probably going to come in one of 3 ways.

He is going to try to make it impossible for you to be a militant Christian;

He is going to try to get you to return to your old life;

Or, he is going to try to make you feel good and self-righteous about what you're doing, as to rob your dependence on the Lord.

His most frequent attack starts with fear, especially the fear of man. This fear keeps us silent when we know we should speak. It keeps us from standing when we know something is wrong. If we refuse to stand, the enemy gains ground. Fear exposes where our faith needs strengthening, and if we do not confront it, we will likely shrink back the next time the opportunity comes.

Fear of failure is another deception. The devil whispers, "Why even bother? It will not work. That person will not want to hear you. You may not be able to answer all their questions." He will say anything to keep you from obeying God's command.

He can also come through a weak spot such as a physical attack, like a severe headache, which will cause you to lose focus, and then you fear going out until you "feel" better. So if you yield to it, the devil has found a weak spot, and he will keep giving you headaches every time, so that you do not go out and lay hands on people so that they may be healed.

One more distraction of the devil is being "entangled" in the affairs of this life. Every time you have an opportunity to shine, he reminds you of something "important" you have got to do. There will always be distractions, but commitment and obedience set priorities.

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One other trick of the devil is condemnation over the past. The Salvation Army used to have a practice of sending their born-again recruits back into their old life, right where they came from, as a testimony to the people that they lived with before their new life. So, we should not be afraid nor condemned about our past. It is past, and we do not want to go back to it except to stand against it, and tell our former friends how to be free too.

“Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” (Ephesians 2:2,3)

The change in our lives, that our friends will see, is by the grace of God, through salvation: “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8,10)

One of the greatest signs of our freedom is the fact that we hate the shackles of our previous lives. Jesus made this clear when He said, “He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John 12:25). It is important to understand that this ‘hate’ is a comparison. Our love for God and His will is more important to us than the ‘affairs of this life’ and we ‘hate’ the distractions of this life that keep us from God’s will in our lives. Being “saved” refers to being set free from the bondage of this world and a total deliverance to where people cannot recognize the formerly demonized person that you were. That’s what the water baptism is supposed to represent. You go down as a sinner, and you rise as a born-again, changed and delivered militant for Christ.

We can call ourselves Christians if we want to, the devil does not care. But it is when we are actively changed that the devil fears, when we do the Lord’s commandments. Jesus said when asked about His personal family: “For whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:50). Conversely, Jesus said, “Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do NOT do the things that I say?” (Luke 6:46). Christianity is not just a name tag and a quick prayer. It is total freedom from the shackles of the past and a militant decision to walk into

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your new life. Jesus said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Jesus expects us to be focused and determined in our discipline. He said, "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master" (Matthew 10:24,25). And James warned the believers not to be double-minded, "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. That man should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:6-8).

John talks about the "lures" of the world and says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world" (1 John 2:15,16)

If you have a lust for the world you need to study the effects of sin. James says, "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death" (Jam 1:14,15). "Enticed" means tempted with compromise which leads to sin. Sin is no small thing. Sin leads to death. It leads to destruction. The sin of Cain, which appeared to be simple anger against Abel, led to murder.

Nowadays the churches tend to be soft on sin. Before someone gets saved, and perhaps was an alcoholic, they say, "he needed to be delivered of a devil". But once they've joined the church, they say "he's got a problem". People are allowed to say, "I have a problem with pronography." --Or with anger, or jealousy, or with drinking. These are not just little "problems"! Peter admonishes is to "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). The end-purpose of the devil is to hurt as many people as possible and then to take them out. That is why the life of a disciple is called war! --and not to be taken lightly! This is a serious calling.

We are in a spiritual war. The enemy is out to render us useless spiritually. Jesus calls us to be separate from the world. "Come out from among them and be separate, saith the Lord." (2 Corinthians 6:17). You do not want the world to have any part of you. "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"(1 John 5:19). The world draws us into so many different distractions that are very appealing: sports, politics,

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fashion, comfort, TV and on goes the list. John is pretty adamant about staying clear of the things of the world. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

If you want to be dedicated and live fully for God and abide in His protection and blessings you need to draw the line between the world and your commitment for God. James said "Pure religion and undefiled before God, the Father, is to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27).

God gave us the authority to destroy the works of the devil, even in our own lives. In the garden, unfortunately, Adam gave the dominion of his life to the devil through compromise, but at the cross Jesus took the dominion back, and gave it back to us. So, we have full authority over the works of the devil. Jesus said, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). That is part of the new man's inheritance.

We have a big part to play in bringing the will of God on earth. And we cannot do that with one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom of God. Paul warned Timothy, saying, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Timothy 2: 4-6).

But you say, "How can I fight against the pulls of the world and my own weaknesses?" The answer is fairly simple. As in any war, you can't win a defensive warfare, you can't be undecided! To win, you must attack, attack, attack. James said, "Attack the devil and he will flee from you" (Jam 4:7). Make a concerted move against the pulls of the world, and those weaknesses in your life. Focus until you win. If you fight, you'll win, but you have to fight until you win.

A lot of people have told me that, though they want to be used by God, they're too busy. They have got their own agendas. They have their plans and dreams and ambitions, and they do not have any time to give to God. If you are serious about being used by God, say, "Lord, what do I need to let go of? What do I need to cut out? What barriers are holding me back, keeping me from running the race you have planned for me?"

One of the biggest barriers is distractions. Jesus said in Luke 9:62, "Anyone who lets himself be distracted from the work I plan for him is not fit

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for the Kingdom of God” (TLB). There are a few things that are most likely distracting you from your life mission:

The expectations of other people. You have got to decide who you are going to please first in life. And anything and anyone that comes before the Lord, you have got to reevaluate.

Time-consuming hobbies. There is nothing wrong with having hobbies. But if they distract you from the most important things, then you need to make a change.

Your past. Are you holding on to guilt, resentment, or grief? When you are stuck in the past, you cannot get on with the present—and you certainly cannot get on with God’s future for you. Your past is past. It is over! So let it go.

You may have to declutter your life. Lots of things are not necessarily wrong; they are just not necessary. Life is often a choice between “Am I going to do something good?” or “Am I going to do what’s best?” If the devil cannot make you bad, he will make you busy. He will get you so busy that you do not have time for the important things—ministry, mission, and time alone with God. You cannot do it all. So do what matters most! Simplify your life and eliminate distractions so God can use you.

The best way that I have found to let go of the compromises in my life and the bad habits, even the serious addictions, is to declare a fast. Fasting is very powerful because you subjugate the flesh, with its carnal emotions and self-centered will. You regain control in the spirit by making your body obey you. And in the process, you humble yourself before God and He has the opportunity to show you the different areas that need to be revisited. And because you have already won the victory for a whole day of not eating (and drinking), or 2 or 3 days or however long, it is then very easy to keep up the discipline thereafter. You can make your fast as long as you want depending on how much you want to get rid of, and how close to God you want to get. You will be amazed at how much clutter is in your life that detracts you from God.

But whatever you do, fight for your life, your spiritual life that is. Donot turn your back on the enemy. Jesus fully equipped us saying, “I give you power over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). We face him and rebuke him and cast him out! We go after our weaknesses and sins with God’s Word and we get delivered. And we fight till we win. Faith is not passive. It

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is aggressive and on the offensive. Faith speaks of the victories ahead in the past tense. It is knowing that you will be winning, therefore it is considered done. You cannot just try out faith. You have to commit to a victory and attack until you win. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

The mind is most powerful and productive when it is focused. That is why we must be single-minded and not double-minded. Paul explained to the Corinthians the essence of spiritual separation when he said, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make My dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you'" (2 Corinthians 6:14 to 17). We cannot walk in full devotion while remaining attached to the very things Christ has called us out of. So let us walk a disciplined path, because Jesus said the gate is narrow and the way is difficult that leads to life (Matthew 7:13 to 14). Amen?

# How To Be More Than Conquerors



Jesus bestowed a remarkable gift upon all believers when He said, "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19). This divine authority isn't reserved for a select few—it is our inheritance as children of God.

As believers, our primary task is to embrace and exercise the power and dominion inherent in our new identity. The apostle John affirmed this truth, writing, "For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). The word "whosoever" is inclusive—every born-again believer has access to this victory.

Many Christians struggle to grasp the magnitude of their God-given power. The Great Commission in Mark 16:15 commands us to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." That is the one part of that verse that is emphasized in most churches. Yet this command does not stand alone, there is more and it is in the same sentence in Mark 16. Jesus continued with powerful promises: "And these signs will follow those who believe: in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17-18).

This authority comes with both privilege and responsibility. Jesus declared, "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). Just as the seventy disciples returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17), we too can exercise this authority today. We not only have to believe this, but put our faith into action. James reminds us, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

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God has equipped us with powerful spiritual weapons for this warfare. Chief among them is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). Scripture tells us, "For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

The victory is already secured through Christ. As Paul writes, "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). We hold the power of attorney from the highest authority in existence—when we believe and act upon this truth, victory manifests.

Jesus came with a clear purpose: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Through His life, death, and resurrection, He accomplished this mission completely. As John asks rhetorically, "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5).

Under the new covenant, Christ dwells within us. Though the enemy may attempt to sow doubt and fear, Jesus promised, "He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (John 14:12). This indwelling presence gives us tremendous power, as John confirms: "The Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14).

Remember always that "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). When facing spiritual attacks, we can stand on God's promise that "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).

Our victory requires active participation through faith. Paul instructs us to take up "the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one" (Ephesians 6:16). As Jesus taught, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23).

Through Christ, we are indeed more than conquerors—but this triumph must be claimed through active, living faith that overcomes the world. As

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Paul declares, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

# A Disciple Makes Disciples



Imagine standing before the Lord in heaven, and He asks you a piercing question: “Why did My Gospel stop with you? Why did you not tell others the Good News that they too could be freed from the shackles of the world?”

This question may make us uncomfortable, but it strikes at the heart of our calling as Christians. When we truly contemplate the incomprehensible price Jesus paid for our salvation, His suffering, His death on the cross, His burial, and His victory over the grave, how can we keep this transforming message to ourselves? Paul declared, “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

Our mandate to share God’s love is not optional. It is fundamental to our faith. John beautifully expresses this when he writes, “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:9 to 11). If we have received such love, then love must move through us toward others.

Consider the transformative power if every believer truly embraced their role in God’s grand mission. If each of us seriously committed to sharing His love and teachings with others, we could witness a spiritual revolution unprecedented in human history. Jesus Himself promised, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The urgency of this mission becomes clear when we look at the sobering statistics: 2.8 billion people have never heard the Gospel message. Thousands of languages still lack Bible translations, and 50-70% of the world’s population cannot read their own language. These are not just numbers—they

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represent souls Christ died to save. As Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

The apostle John challenges us with these convicting words: "This is how we have come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed His life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it, but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears. And you made it disappear" (1 John 3:16 MSG).

The concept of discipleship weaves throughout the New Testament like a golden thread. Jesus' final command was clear: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). He elaborated on this spiritual multiplication in John 15:5, saying, "I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." This fruit is not just personal holiness—it's the reproduction of Christ's life in others through discipleship.

True discipleship goes further than personal spiritual maturation; it is about creating new life in Christ. Just as Jesus began His ministry by preaching the Gospel (Matthew 4:17) and calling others to follow Him, He commissions us to be "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). The primary tool? The living, active Word of God, "sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).

Paul's instruction to Timothy provides a brilliant blueprint for spiritual multiplication: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). This verse outlines four generations of discipleship: Paul to Timothy to faithful believers to others. It's a divine strategy for exponential spiritual growth, echoing Jesus' parable of the multiplying seed (Mark 4:20).

The question is not whether we should engage in this mission—it is how we will respond to this divine calling and responsibility. With today's technology, we have unprecedented opportunities to share the Gospel. Free resources abound, from downloadable tracts to comprehensive discipleship materials like the "Handbook For a Disciple of Jesus." Plus, we can reach people around the world through Zoom calls, so if you speak a foreign language, you can reach out to people across the globe every day.

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Why wait for institutional initiative? The early church spread through individual believers sharing their faith in homes, marketplaces, and wherever they found themselves. As Peter and John declared, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Let us start small but think big. Begin with one or two people, meeting weekly via Zoom or in person, studying God's Word and using available discipleship resources. As Jesus showed with His twelve disciples, a small group committed to multiplication can transform the world. Remember His promise: "Greater works than these will you do, because I go to the Father" (John 14:12).

The question is not whether we are capable—God's Spirit empowers us. The question is whether we're willing to be used by God in His grand mission of redemption. As Paul reminds us, "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7).

When we were discipling young people, we would tell them, "All you need is a one-way ticket." These words were not just a catchy phrase. They were our declaration of faith, echoing the radical trust of Abraham, who "went out, not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8). That is exactly what our team of twelve did. We purchased one-way tickets to Africa with nothing but \$5,000 in landing funds and an unwavering belief in God's provision.

We landed in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, armed with little more than faith. Looking back, it may have seemed foolish by worldly standards, but Paul reminds us that "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Our apparent lack of resources would soon become the canvas upon which God would paint His masterpiece of provision.

I was the only one out of twelve who spoke French. The others spoke only English. Yet just three days after our arrival, God began to open doors. During an evening walk with Linda, we heard English voices coming from a nearby restaurant. That encounter revealed something extraordinary: these people were connected to a community of more than 300,000 Liberian refugees living on the outskirts of Abidjan. We could not help but think of Esther 4:14: "Yet who knows whether you have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this?" This was not coincidence. It was a divine appointment.

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The language barrier initially seemed daunting, but within three months, our entire team had learned enough French to share the Gospel effectively. We witnessed the promise of Philippians 4:19: "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus." Our team members began winning souls in a language they had barely known months before.

When we first went to the refugee area, we could hardly believe the poverty before our eyes. We took pictures of the situation, and a week later we came back with numerous provisions. The directors of the community were speechless. We asked them if something was wrong. One of them replied, "You came back. So many people come to visit our destitute situation, take pictures with us for their newsletters, and then never return. That is why we do not know what to say."

Our next step was to build a Christian school in the Liberian refugee center. This was not just about education. It was about demonstrating God's love in practical ways and following Jesus' command to "feed My lambs" (John 21:15). The provision that followed was nothing short of miraculous.

My eldest son, moved by faith and compassion, approached the owner of Abidjan's main bakery. Since we had no vehicle, he would squeeze into a taxi every day, surrounded by bags of donated bread. It became a modern-day reminder of the boy with five loaves and two fish whom Jesus used in the feeding of the multitude (John 6:9). Many members of the Lebanese business community, most of whom were Muslim, also provided building materials for the school. As we shared the Gospel with them, they shared their resources with us. It became a beautiful picture of how God can move through many people to accomplish His work.

The owner of the pasta factory became another link in God's chain of provision, committing to supply all the pasta needed for the schoolchildren. This reminded us daily of Jesus' words: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Each donation, each provision, and each open door testified to God's faithfulness.

For ten years, we witnessed countless miracles as we served in Africa. The principle was simple yet profound: as we poured ourselves out for others, God ensured our cups overflowed. As Isaiah 58:10 promises, "If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday."

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Our story illustrates a fundamental truth about mission work: it really does come down to just GOING. Jesus didn't say "go when everything is perfectly planned" or "go when you have sufficient funds." He simply said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). When we obey this command in faith, we discover what George Müller knew so well: "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply."

The refugees we served taught us as much about faith as we taught them about God. They had left everything behind, just as we had, and in our shared experience of depending wholly on God, we saw His faithfulness manifested daily. As Paul wrote, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Our decade in Africa proved that when God calls, He provides—often in ways we could never have imagined or orchestrated ourselves. He does not always show us the whole path, but as the old hymn says, "One step enough for me." Sometimes, all it takes is buying that one-way ticket and trusting that the God who called you will make a way where there seems to be no way.

# Multiplying Jesus



Hidden since before time began, the mystery of the Gospel remained veiled until Christ revealed it through His apostles, and especially through Paul. This profound revelation was simple yet earth-shattering: Christ in you, Christ through you. Today, the presence of Christ is multiplied across the earth through His followers. Jesus did not merely promise that we would continue His work. He declared that those who believe in Him would do the works He did, and even greater works, because He was going to the Father (John 14:12).

Satan's greatest miscalculation came at the cross. By moving through wicked men to bring about Jesus' death, he thought he was solving his ultimate problem. Instead, the cross became the very place of his defeat. Within days, 120 Spirit-filled believers emerged from the upper room, declaring the wonderful works of God and moving in the power of the Spirit. About 3,000 were added in one day, and soon the number of believers grew even more, until Acts records that the number of men came to about 5,000. Like a divine wildfire, the more opposition tried to stamp it out, the faster it spread.

The apostle Paul captured this magnificent truth in Colossians 1:27: "To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." This verse still staggers the mind—we are no longer bound by limitations. In the spiritual realm, we possess power beyond our comprehension because the Living God dwells within each believer.

Yet too often, we are caught in the web of daily struggles—paying bills, managing problems—while the devil keeps us distracted from living out this age-old mystery. Imagine if we fully grasped our identity and potential. We could become spiritual governors over our communities, transforming them according to God's will, making His kingdom manifest on earth as it is in heaven. Picture declaring with authority: "This area is now free from addiction!" or "Cancer has no jurisdiction here!"

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This is not mere fantasy. Consider John G. Lake's remarkable ministry in Spokane, Washington. He mobilized believers throughout the city to heal the sick, turning it into America's healthiest city. He later replicated this success in Portland, Oregon, demonstrating the practical power of faith in action.

If the Body of Christ truly embraced this revelation, we could systematically eliminate evil around us. Drug laboratories destroying young lives? Gone. Social decay? Transformed. Just as Paul single-handedly impacted all of Asia Minor (Acts 19:10), imagine what a unified body of Christ could accomplish today.

Take a moment to reflect on Hebrews 11, the great hall of faith. These were not supernatural beings—they were ordinary people who believed in an extraordinary God. Now, we carry the fullness of Christ within us. United as one body, we become an unstoppable force for transformation in our communities.

Jesus' promise that we would do greater works was not exaggeration. It was a divine mandate. Throughout His ministry, Scripture records that multitudes came to Him, "and He healed them all" (Matthew 12:15). We inherit this same mission: to proclaim the Kingdom, minister life, confront darkness, and demonstrate the victory of Jesus wherever we go.

The only barrier? Unbelief—the same obstacle that plagued the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt. Despite witnessing unprecedented miracles—plagues that crippled Egypt, the Red Sea parting before their eyes—their lack of faith kept them from claiming their promised inheritance. As Moses declared in Numbers 14:11, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?"

The truth remains: God faces no limitations except our unbelief. Just as the Israelites stood at the edge of their promised land, we stand at the threshold of our divine potential. The moment we truly believe that "God can," a world of supernatural possibilities opens before us. As Jesus said, "All things are possible for one who believes" (Mark 9:23).

# Are You “Discipling” Your Children?



Raising children stands as one of God's most sacred assignments to humanity. For Christian parents, this calling carries even greater weight, as we are entrusted with nurturing not just their physical and emotional growth, but their eternal spirits. As Proverbs 22:6 reminds us, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This divine instruction has never been more crucial than in our present age.

The spiritual battlefield for our children's hearts has intensified dramatically. While previous generations worried primarily about faith challenges during college years, today's parents face unprecedented spiritual warfare even in elementary schools. Our children encounter conflicting worldviews through social media, entertainment, and education at increasingly younger ages. This reality makes intentional discipleship at home not just important, but crucial for their spiritual survival.

The essence of discipling our children begins with creating an atmosphere where Christ is central to daily life. This is not about rigid religious routines, but rather weaving the presence of God into the fabric of everyday moments. When children wake to the sound of worship music, hear prayers over their meals, and witness their parents turning to Scripture for guidance, they absorb the reality of a living faith. These seemingly small moments build a foundation that can withstand future challenges.

Children need to understand early that they belong to God's kingdom, operating under different principles than the world. As Jesus taught in John 17:16, "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." This profound truth should shape their identity from their earliest years. When children grasp that they're part of a divine story—that their citizenship is in heaven—it transforms how they view themselves and their purpose in life.

Like athletic coaches preparing champions, parents must maintain focused discipline in training their children. Coaches may not be the ones standing on

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the podium, but they share in the victory. Their medal may not hang around their neck, but it rests in their heart. They cherish the potential they believed in and paid a mighty price to develop. It is the countless hours of sacrifice, training, correction, encouragement, and patience that become wings of glory for the ones they have poured into. God made it so that there is greater blessing in giving than in receiving. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Parents find some of their deepest fulfillment, joy, and life's greatest accomplishments in their children. Their reward is seen in the flourishing life of the child they trained, loved, corrected, and guided. That is why training is discipleship. It is the act of forming and training a winner. This spiritual coaching requires consistency, wisdom, and tremendous patience. Every moment becomes an opportunity for teaching, whether explaining God's creation during a nature walk, discussing forgiveness after a sibling dispute, or demonstrating God's love through serving others together. These daily interactions shape a child's understanding of who God is and how He works in our lives.

The challenge of maintaining clear boundaries while showing abundant love mirrors our heavenly Father's approach to His children. Solomon's wisdom in Proverbs 13:24 emphasizes this balance: "Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them." Modern parents must navigate this principle with grace and wisdom, understanding that discipline isn't about corporal punishment but about discipleship—guiding our children toward spiritual maturity.

Perhaps one of the most crucial aspects of discipling children is maintaining strong emotional connections, especially during the teenage years. When the world pulls at their hearts and minds, the strength of their relationship with parents often determines their ability to stand firm in faith. Creating safe spaces for honest conversations, being present during their struggles, and sharing appropriate personal testimonies builds bridges that can carry truth to their hearts.

Teaching children to make decisions through a biblical lens requires patience and intentionality. Rather than simply giving rules, wise parents help their children understand the principles behind God's instructions. This approach equips them to resolve complex choices with wisdom, applying Scripture to real-life situations. When children see their parents seeking God's guidance in decisions, it reinforces the practical value of biblical wisdom.

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The authenticity of our own faith journey speaks volumes to our children. They need to see genuine Christianity lived out—complete with struggles, victories, and daily dependence on God's grace. When parents admit their mistakes, ask for forgiveness, and demonstrate growth in their own faith, it shows children that following Christ is about relationship rather than perfection.

Jesus' words in John 12:24 perfectly capture the essence of Christian parenting: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." This dying to self—the countless sacrifices of time, energy, and personal comfort—produces eternal rewards as we watch our children grow into strong disciples of Christ.

The consequences of neglecting this sacred duty are severe. As Ecclesiastes 8:11 warns, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Jesus Himself emphasized the gravity of our influence on children, warning in Matthew 18:6 about the severe consequences of causing little ones to stumble.

While discipling children demands tremendous sacrifice, Hebrews 12:11 offers this encouraging promise: "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." This harvest manifests in children who not only know about God but know Him personally and walk confidently in their faith.

Remember, if we do not disciple our children, the world will gladly fill that void. The price of regret is always greater than the price of discipline. Parents must count the cost from the start. Our investment in their spiritual formation isn't optional—it is a sacred trust given to us by God Himself. Through consistent, loving guidance and intentional spiritual direction, we can help our children develop deep, lasting faith that will carry them through life's challenges and into eternity.

As we pour out our lives in this sacred task of discipling our children, we partner with God in shaping the next generation of faithful believers. Every moment invested echoes into eternity, creating a legacy of faith that can impact generations to come. This is the essence of discipleship—passing on not just information about God, but a living, breathing relationship with Him that transforms lives from the inside out.

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When you are a parent, you are a disciple maker, everything you share with the kids should have a spiritual spin on it. It is literally like coaching others with God's Word.

As Christians, we should incorporate the Lord into virtually everything we do. "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). Discipling does not have to happen only in Bible classes. Our Christian identity affects everything we do because we are Christians 24/7, true through and through. Paul taught Timothy to be constantly ready to teach and correct. He said, "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

Every aspect of our life should reflect the principles and values of the Word. We cannot be Christians only in-cathedra but also ex-cathedra. The gospel applies to every aspect of our life. Recently, I was in need of coaching myself in regards to how to use social media better. Of course my ultimate goal is to shine the Lord's truth and love in all of my interactions on social media. But the person sharing with me kept bringing Scripture into the conversation. I thought, "Here is someone who really understands what discipling is all about." He was not separating practical life from spiritual truth.

We understand that with children, training has to be consistent and continual. Solomon said, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). It is the same with discipling. Consistency is the name of the game.

I want to put in a strong recommendation for the book of Proverbs. It is one of the best tools for coaching and discipling because it is filled with spiritual laws, practical wisdom, keys to success, and instruction for becoming a strong spiritual person. I would encourage anyone serious about discipleship to read the proverb of the day, every day.

The Great Commission of preaching the Gospel and making disciples is not just for missionaries and pastors. It is for families. The call to make disciples must begin with the people in our own home. When this becomes a joy, not a burden, when it becomes natural, not manufactured, and when discipling becomes intentional, not left to chance, then missions become part of the foundation of the home. Your family becomes a force that shines godly values to the world around you.

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God told Moses, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:5 to 7).

Family discipleship should overflow beyond the home. It should touch people at work, at school, at play, and throughout the community. As parents, we have the divine task of teaching our children who God is and what He is like. If the goal of discipleship is trust in Christ, then almost any moment can become an opportunity to show them Jesus and His trustworthiness.

Remind your children of what God has done in the past, what you see Him doing in their lives now, and what you believe He will do in the future. God is a personal God, and you have the opportunity to continually reintroduce your family to Him through daily testimonies.

Make friends with other discipling parents so you can compare notes and sharpen one another. This also gives your children friends who are being encouraged in the same biblical training and values. The psalmist said, “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

# Let's Be Fighters



In an age of moral relativism, undefined philosophies and spiritual compromise, conviction has become a rare commodity. Yet, as believers, we must understand that faith without conviction is like a ship without an anchor—destined to drift with every changing wind of doctrine. You simply cannot live a meaningful Christian life without deep-seated conviction. When serving the Lord, you must be thoroughly convinced of His truth and be prepared to stand as its ambassador, regardless of the cost.

The great reformer Martin Luther embodied this spirit when he declared before the Diet of Worms, "Here I stand, I can do no other." His unwavering conviction, faced with death threats and excommunication, changed the course of history. Today, we need this same resolute spirit. As Paul declared to the Corinthians, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Faith, by its very nature, is active and dynamic. It is a force that moves mountains, parts seas, and transforms lives. Joshua demonstrated this when he boldly proclaimed, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). This was not a passive statement of preference, but a declaration of war against every opposing force.

The enemy of our souls understands the power of conviction, which is why he works tirelessly to erode it. His strategy has not changed since the Garden of Eden when he whispered, "Did God really say?" (Genesis 3:1). Today, he still deals in half-truths and subtle compromises, knowing that spiritual defeat often begins with small concessions. The devil will do everything he can to tempt you to forsake God's way. If he cannot get you to stop trusting God, he will try to get you to compromise and be so weak, you won't STAND for anything.

Think of Samson—his downfall did not start with Delilah's betrayal. It began with small compromises, minor infractions of his Nazirite vow, each one weakening his resolve until finally, his strength was gone, and he did not even know it (Judges 16:20). The enemy's tactics remain the same: he does

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not usually attempt to destroy your faith in one dramatic assault. Instead, he seeks to erode it gradually, one small compromise at a time.

That "harmless" little sin, that "insignificant" compromise—these are the cracks in our spiritual armor through which the enemy's poison seeps. As Solomon warned, "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines" (Song of Solomon 2:15). These small compromises can eventually lead to complete spiritual derailment unless we stand firm against them.

The Bible is filled with examples of men and women who stood their ground against overwhelming odds. Daniel faced the lions' den rather than compromise his prayer life. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose the fiery furnace over bowing to an idol. Peter and John declared before the Sanhedrin, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). These were not just historical figures—they were fighters who understood that conviction demands firm action.

God is looking for warriors today—men and women of stout heart and unwavering conviction. As David proclaimed, "The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle" (Psalm 24:8), He seeks those who will stand strong in spiritual warfare. The apostle Paul understood this when he wrote, "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12) and "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

The command is clear: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Notice it does not say the enemy might flee—he will flee when confronted with steadfast resistance. But this resistance requires giving "no place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). No compromise, no matter how small, can be entertained.

True conviction produces unstoppable believers. Like Paul, they can say, "None of these things move me" (Acts 20:24). You cannot deter a person of genuine faith because they have found something worth living and dying for. They possess what the writer of Hebrews describes as "the full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22), moving forward with single-minded determination until their mission is accomplished.

Our gratitude for salvation should fuel this fighting spirit. As Paul reasoned, "For the love of Christ compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). This compelling force should drive us to stand firm, to fight the good fight, to finish the race, and to keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:7). We must be willing to

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echo the words of the prophet Micah: "But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (Micah 3:8).

In these last days, as darkness increases and deception abounds, God is calling for fighters—believers who will stand unmoved on His truth, who will defend His Word without apology, and who will advance His kingdom without retreat. May we be counted among those who did not just believe the truth, but stood for it, fought for it, and if necessary, were willing to die for it. For as our Lord Jesus declared, "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

# "If Anyone Will Come After Me..."



"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24).

These words of Jesus cut through centuries of religious comfort, striking at the very heart of what it means to be His disciple. They are not a gentle suggestion, but a revolutionary call to complete surrender.

The main reason why it is important for us to address the topic of genuine discipleship is because we're going towards tougher times as Christians. In our age of convenient Christianity and comfortable faith, we must confront the stark reality of true discipleship. As we march toward increasingly challenging times for believers, understanding the cost of following Christ becomes not just important, but crucial for survival. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who gave his life for his faith under Nazi Germany, powerfully stated: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." This death is not necessarily physical—though millions of martyrs throughout history have paid that price—but rather a death to self, to ambition, to worldly security.

The magnificent truth of God's Word illuminates this path of sacrifice. David exulted, "I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil" (Psalms 119:162), understanding that divine truth surpasses all earthly treasures. "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalms 19:8). This revelation brings us back to our original purpose—not comfort or success as the world defines it, but complete surrender to our Creator's will.

Some ask, "Why can't I just be a Christian without having to be a disciple—and a militant one at that?" The answer is simple: there is no such a thing. A Christian is supposed to be a disciple. Jesus answers this directly: "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:38). The early church father Tertullian observed, "The blood of

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the martyrs is the seed of the church." They understood that following Christ meant potentially sacrificing everything.

What makes us followers of Christ is the fact that we apply the teaching of the teacher. A disciple is essentially a practitioner of the discipline. Reading the Bible is only the beginning step to being a disciple. Then we must obey the teachings of Jesus to be an active disciple. The Word of God is meant to be bread for daily use, not cake for special occasions. Paul told Timothy, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continuing in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:15,16).

Hudson Taylor, who surrendered a comfortable life to bring the gospel to China, said, "Christ is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all." This total lordship requires abandoning what Paul describes in Titus 3:3: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." These aren't just bad habits—they are chains that bind us to a dying world.

Jesus' words in Mark 8:34-35 present a divine paradox: "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it." Jim Elliot, before being martyred by those he sought to reach with the gospel, wrote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." This profound truth echoes Jesus' teaching about the grain of wheat that must fall into the ground and die to bear fruit (John 12:24).

True discipleship demands more than biblical knowledge—it requires a living transformation. As Jesus demonstrated in washing His disciples' feet, saying, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15), following Him means serving others at the cost of our own dignity and comfort. Charles Spurgeon noted, "If Christ be anything, He must be everything."

The Apostle Paul understood this when he wrote to Timothy, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Timothy 4:15). This total commitment sets believers apart from the world system. As John reminds us, "Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). This separation is not just external—it is a fundamental reorientation of our entire being.

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Leonard Ravenhill, that fearless revival preacher, once said, "The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized within the lifetime of the opportunity." Today, we face our opportunity—will we embrace comfortable Christianity, or will we answer Christ's call to die to self? Will we choose the narrow path that leads to life, though few find it (Matthew 7:14)?

The cost of discipleship has not changed since Jesus first issued His call. As He warned in Luke 14:33, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." This forsaking is not just of possessions, but of our very selves—our rights, our ambitions, our comfort, our security. It is a complete surrender that paradoxically leads to true freedom.

In our world of shallow commitments and casual faith, the call to genuine discipleship sounds radical—because it is. It is a call to die daily (1 Corinthians 15:31), to present our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1), to count everything as loss for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord (Philippians 3:8). This is the path of true discipleship—costly, demanding, yet filled with the presence and power of the One who bid us "Come, follow Me.

# With Persecution...



“Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

Persecution is not merely a possibility. Jesus told us to expect it. In our increasingly secular age, where absolute truth is rejected, moral standards are culturally defined, and universal principles are treated as outdated, genuine Christian faith stands in sharp contrast to the spirit of the times.

Richard Wurmbrand, who spent 14 years in Communist prisons for his faith, once said, “The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.” Today’s Christians face a similar challenge—will we stand firm when our faith costs us something? Will we speak truth when silence points to comfort? As Charles Spurgeon noted, “If your religion does not change you, you need to change your religion.”

The early Christians did not have the luxury of secret faith. They faced lions in the Colosseum, torture in dungeons, and exile from their communities. Yet the church did not just survive—it thrived. Tertullian’s famous observation that “the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church” wasn’t mere rhetoric; it was historical fact. Today’s persecution may be more subtle—social exclusion, professional discrimination, cultural mockery—but the challenge to authentic faith remains the same.

Like the old washer-woman who was ridiculed one day by someone who said they had seen her talking about Jesus to a wooden Indian in front of a cigar store! She perked up and replied, “Maybe I did! My eyesight isn’t so good anymore! But talking to a wooden Indian about Jesus is not as bad as being a wooden Christian and never talking about Jesus to anyone!” This echoes Jesus’ warning about hiding our light under a bushel (Matthew 5:15). True faith, by its very nature, cannot be hidden. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer, martyred by the Nazis, declared, “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”

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The parable of the sower speaks directly to this reality: "They have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the Word's sake, immediately they stumble" (Mark 4:17). Shallow faith withers under pressure, but genuine faith—rooted in Christ—grows stronger through trials. As the great missionary Hudson Taylor observed, "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them."

Modern society increasingly views Christian virtues—submission, obedience, humility—as weaknesses. Yet these very "weaknesses" have transformed civilizations. As Paul boldly proclaimed, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Our strength lies not in social acceptance or cultural approval, but in Christ alone. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Christianity stands unique among world religions because its founder is not just a historical figure—He is alive! And our living faith demands living witnesses. When King Solomon warned, "If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength" (Proverbs 24:10), he understood that trials reveal the reality of our faith.

The cost of discipleship has not changed since Jesus declared, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). Corrie ten Boom, who survived Nazi concentration camps for hiding Jews, said, "There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still." This truth sustained countless martyrs and continues to strengthen believers facing persecution worldwide.

The words of Jesus remain clear: those who refuse to take up their cross are "not worthy" of Him and cannot be His disciples (Matthew 10:38; Luke 14:27). This is not about earning salvation—it's about demonstrating its reality. As the apostle Peter reminded his persecuted readers, "If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:20-21).

In our comfort-seeking culture, the call to sacrificial Christianity sounds extreme. But Christ paid an extreme price for the spiritual liberties that we can now enjoy. True faith cannot remain private—it must shine like a city on a hill (Matthew 5:14). The question is not whether persecution will come; it is whether we will stand firm when it does.

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The promise of persecution comes with an even greater promise: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). In the end, the temporary discomfort of standing for truth pales against the eternal weight of glory being prepared for us (2 Corinthians 4:17). Let us then shine His light boldly, knowing that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in us (Romans 8:11), empowering us to stand firm in an increasingly hostile world.

# “This One Thing I Do”



True discipleship demands an unwavering commitment that brooks no compromise. Like a runner fixing their eyes on the finish line, the genuine follower of Christ maintains an unshakeable focus on their divine calling. Having tasted the sweetness of salvation, experienced the peace that surpasses all understanding, and been illuminated by the living Word, we discover that half-hearted devotion is no devotion at all.

Count Zinzendorf, who led the great Moravian missionary movement, captured this spirit when he declared, "I have but one passion: It is He, it is He alone." This single-minded devotion heralds through the ages a message of dedication and commitment in the lives of those who truly want to follow Jesus. The apostle Paul proclaimed, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13).

C.T. Studd, who gave away his fortune to serve as a missionary, penned these immortal words: "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." This radical abandonment to Christ reflects the fundamental nature of true discipleship. It is not about partial commitment or convenient faith—it is about total surrender and unwavering devotion to the mission.

Paul told the Ephesians: "You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds... Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds" (Ephesians 4:17, 22-23).

Jesus said: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). The attempt to live with divided loyalties inevitably leads to spiritual paralysis.

James's warning about double-mindedness (James 1:8) finds its echo in the lives of countless believers who tried to straddle the fence between

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wholehearted devotion and worldly compromise. There is no time for hesitation and no place for lukewarmness in the kingdom of God.

King David's passionate declaration still challenges us today: "One thing I ask of the Lord, this alone I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord" (Psalms 27:4). This single-minded focus characterized the great men and women of faith throughout history. Amy Carmichael, who spent 55 years as a missionary in India without a furlough, wrote, "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving."

The early church father Augustine reflected this same truth when he prayed, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." This rest comes not from casual commitment but from complete surrender.

Peter's exhortation to "make every effort to make permanent your calling and election" (2 Peter 1:10) speaks to the active nature of this commitment. It is not a passive acceptance but an aggressive pursuit of Christ's lordship in every area of life. As A.W. Tozer observed, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

This total commitment transforms not just our individual lives but ripples out to impact others. As Charles Spurgeon said, "If Christ is not all to you He is nothing to you. He will never go into partnership as a part Saviour of men." The bottom line remains unchanged: discipleship is a total commitment to love—Living for love, in love, to give love, that we may all love and live in love with the God of love. Its about loving God with such intensity that everything else pales in comparison. As the medieval mystic Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, "The measure of love is to love without measure."

In our age of convenient Christianity and comfortable faith, this call to total commitment may seem extreme. Yet as Oswald Chambers reminded us, "The good is always the enemy of the best." Anything less than complete devotion to Christ is a compromise that ultimately leads to spiritual mediocrity.

Let us then fix our hearts, like David, on the "one thing." Let us press forward, like Paul, toward the prize. Let us make our calling and election sure, as Peter urged. For in this unwavering commitment, we find not bondage but true freedom, not limitation but ultimate fulfillment, not loss but eternal gain.

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Let's go over some of the Disciplines of aDisciple:

Daily Reading (Studying) God's Word.

The Psalmist David blessed us with the psalms, proof throughout that he did spend time with the Father. He wrote:

“His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper” (Psalm 1: 2,3). We read the Bible to fellowship with the Lord; we study it to apply His Word to our lives.

Denying Yourself.

This denial of all, including ourselves, is the deepest discipline of discipleship. We have committed ourselves to put Him first before other earthly pleasure—it becomes Jesus ONLY! Jesus tells us to count the cost (Luke 14:28-33).

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.”

Hanging Around Other Believers.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

We are all parts of a body.

There are over thirty “one another” commands that we cannot obey unless we are in a community of believers. You become who you fellowship with.

“Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.” (1 Corinthians 15: 33, 34)

Daily Praying (Talking) to God.

**Matthew 6:5-6** states: “But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.” Prayer is an important part of communicating with the Father.

Regularly Worshiping Together.

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It glorifies God when His sons and daughters gather together before Him in one place to thank and praise Him. It is also a faith statement to the world that we believe in God and that He loves us and He has always blessed His people.

“And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth forever. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid” (Ez 3:11).

### Honoring God with Your Finances First.

From the very beginning, God gave commandments about tithing. And we read this about Abram giving tithes (10%) to Melchizedek, the king of Salem, the priest of the most high God. Tithing is showing God that He is the One Who gives us everything we have. “Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase.” (Proverbs 3:9)

### We are Called to Service.

Jesus made it very simple. As we love Him first, our love for others and bringing them to Him comes naturally. “For the love of Christ constrains us” (2 Corinthians 5:14a).

### Serving the Lord means shining our light!

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

### Make disciples of all nations.

“Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples” (John 15:8)

“And He said unto them, ‘Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’” (Mk 16:15).

### A Forgiving Heart.

**2 Corinthians 2:10-11** states we need to always maintain a forgiving heart: “If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have

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forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

Satan enslaves us with an “offended heart”, a “blaming spirit” or a “root of bitterness”.

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

### A Pure Heart

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

Jesus simply tells us to forgive!--It really is a choice! “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14,15).

### Cross-bearing.

Jesus said, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23)

“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:27; Matt. 16:24).

### To follow Him:

“The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord” (Matthew 10:24-25a).

“For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15).

### To abide in Him:

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me” (John 15:4).

### To serve in love and gratitude:

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“He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21).

Love Jesus above all else:

“He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that finds his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:37-39).

Win souls for Jesus!

“And He said unto them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men’” (John 4:19).

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30)

Train more disciples!

“Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19).

Abandon other pursuits to follow Jesus!

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44).

Forsaking worldly and materialistic ambitions:

“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mk 4:19).

“Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for the meat which endure unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed” (Ja 6:27).

Be single-minded and don't look back:

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“And Jesus said unto him, ‘No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God’” (Luke 9:62).

# “Denying The Power Thereof”.



## Why Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Ever tried following a recipe but skipped all the steps? You would end up with quite a mess, right? That is exactly what Christianity looks like when it is all talk and no action. Christianity, if not lived out, has little or no power. It becomes nothing more than a collection of nice ideas gathering dust on a shelf.

That sounds like a bold and blunt statement, but I did not come up with it, Jesus did. Jesus as good as said, “My teachings won’t work for you, unless you do them.” Jesus, in one of his most powerful illustrations, painted a picture we can all understand – the tale of two builders. One was wise, building his house on solid rock. The other? Not so much. Here is how Jesus put it:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24-27).

Think about it: Would you trust a doctor who only read medical books but never practiced medicine? Or a pilot who only studied planes but never flew one? That's why James dropped this truth bomb: "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:14-26). We must desire to see God’s power in our lives through obedience. It is in **DOING** the Word of God that the **POWER** comes. Otherwise, it is like having a high-performance car with no engine – it might look good, but it's not going anywhere.

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The real deal starts at home. It is in those everyday moments with family and friends and coworkers where our faith gets its workout. This is not about putting on a show – Jesus had some choice words for that kind of behavior. He called out the religious leaders of his day, saying they were like "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27-28). Ouch!

Here is what genuine Christianity looks like in action – it is a transformed life powered by the Holy Spirit. It is not just about talking the talk; it is about walking the walk. We must desire discipleship, otherwise there is no evidence. The Spirit produces real, tangible fruit in our lives: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). These aren't just nice qualities to have – they're the DNA of authentic faith.

God's been consistent about this message throughout history. Through Isaiah, He called out those who were all lip service: "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me" (Isaiah 29:13).

And let us tackle the elephant in the room – the "prosperity gospel." You know, that idea that following Jesus is like signing up for a spiritual lottery ticket? Paul wasn't having any of that. He warned about those who "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18). We cannot reduce the message of the Gospel to advertising Jesus like the American Dream saying, "Come to Jesus and you will be blessed." Christianity isn't a get-rich-quick scheme – it is a get-right-with-God and love-your-brother-as-yourself journey.

The real message of the Gospel is sacrificial living. It is about saying no to self and to worldly pursuits so we can say yes to God's purposes. Prosperity may come, but if it does, it should become a tool for Kingdom work, not the goal of our lives. Paul warned against those who suppose "that gain is godliness" (1 Timothy 6:5).

Remember what God told Ezekiel about people who loved to hear the word but would not act on it? He said they treated God's message like entertainment – "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they DO THEM NOT" (Ezekiel 33:30-32).

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So here is the bottom line: we must stop treating Christianity as something we merely observe. We must become doers of the Word, not professional listeners. Faith that does not change how we live is not living faith at all. It is religious decoration without spiritual power.

The choice is ours. Will we build our house on rock or sand? Will our faith be alive with action, or will it remain only words floating in the wind? The world does not need more religious talk. It needs to see faith in action, starting with you and me.

# Prayer Through Seeing Jesus



Throughout the Bible, God instructed His people to see the outcome before the promise was fulfilled. He did this with Abraham by showing him the stars and asking him to count them, so he could see how numerous his seed would become. “And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be” (Genesis 15:5).

If we go to Hebrews 11, most of these men in the faith "hall of fame", had to first see the end result in order to endure the wait. Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ as greater riches"...(Hebrews 11:26).--The way they could endure was through seeing the end result. Even Jesus was able to endure the cross because He saw the end result of all mankind being given redemption, and the inheritance of righteousness which allowed the re-uniting with the Father.

Jesus gave us a prayer principle in Mark 11:24 when He said, “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” It is when you pray that you believe, see by faith, and hold fast to the desired outcome according to God’s Word. You focus on it, stay fixed on it, and refuse to let circumstances become greater than the promise.

Whenever Linda and I go on a walk, we try to make it a praise walk. We usually begin by saying, “We are so blessed.” If you start enumerating all that redemption has provided for you, you can go on for a long time, simply bathing in God’s awesome love. One of the devil’s greatest tricks is to get our eyes off the promises and make us stare at the circumstances, the obstacles, and the impossibilities.

The very best way for us to keep our eyes on the outcome is to keep our eyes on the initiator of our victory, Jesus, who paid the ultimate price for us to attain all that is promised. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). No one can receive the promises of the Father

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except through the sacrifice that He paid for all of us. He is the door to all that is promised. He is the one that makes provision for us to experience everything that God has prepared for us. All of God's promises are fulfilled through Jesus, because the only way to the Father is through Christ. Paul said, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5).

Suppose you are window shopping. The only way you can seriously consider purchasing what you desire is if you know you have the means to pay for it. It is similar in prayer. We look at the promises through the finished payment of Christ. Jesus paid for the promises of God to be fulfilled in us, through us, and for us. Everything is made available through redemption. He gave us the right to use His name. His name is our authority before the Father, the evidence that the price has already been paid in full.

"Behold the Son". You can only find your new identity through beholding the Son's victory. The secret of faith is to get your eyes off your troubles, your sorrow, your lack, and onto the victory provided through Christ. You have been turned into "more than a conqueror". There is no need to rehearse your problems, your anguish and your woes. None of those have a place in any prayer. The power of answered prayer is in seeing Jesus and how every promise is fulfilled through Him.

When God asked Joshua to walk around Jericho, He told him to see the city delivered into his hands. He talked to Joshua in the past tense as if it were already done. Look beyond and see the victory Jesus has won. See yourself walking with Jesus, healthy; not with a cane, not with cancer, but tall and straight and healthy, smiling and victorious. Jesus hooks you up to the power of God, the power of health, light, truth and life.

For as long as Peter saw Jesus, he could walk on water. The secret is always to look through and beyond the impossibilities. You have to see in order to receive. If you cannot see the outcome, you cannot receive it. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us." (1 John 5:14). We have confidence through seeing. Whatever I pray for, I get, because I see Jesus' redemptive power.

When Linda and I were in Africa, we received an award at the hand of the Minister of Finance. The event was televised, and this opened just about every door for us. All we had to do afterwards, was mention his name and people associated us with him, and doors would open immediately to help further our work within a Liberian refugee camp.

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Well, in the spirit world, we happen to know the highest authority and the most important name. The name above every name. Faith is more than what you see, it is WHO you see. Actually goes a little bit further than that. And in the kingdom, it's not how much you know, it's WHO you know.

We must not see ourselves as mere religious people through the lens of denominational labels or church titles, saying, "I am a Baptist," "I am a deacon," or "I am a prophet." Rather, let people know that you are filled with Jesus, and that makes you a vessel through whom Christ can touch the world. See Jesus alive in you, and never move from that vision. Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). The life people see through your eyes should be Christ reaching out through you.

Reject all contradictions to the promises of God. God told Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein..." (Joshua 1:8). God's Words are the seeds of your faith. Get those seeds into your heart, because seeds always produce after their kind. And the seed of God will turn you into a son, an actual Christ.

Your thoughts are ideas, and your words are the actual formulation of those ideas. Therefore, you must make sure that your thoughts are aligned with God's purpose for your life. When Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you", He was saying that all the creativity of God is made available for you and through you.

Let us not be limited or confined by education, religion or culture. They all tell you how you must be and how you must behave. They tell you how important you can be or not be; how guilty you should feel or how sickness-conscious you ought to be. --How poor; what you can and cannot afford, what car you can drive, what salary you can have.

Rather, listen to God and tune in to His opinion of you, and how it was all made possible through Jesus. Never go without your checkbook, "the name above all names" that paid and still pays for everything. That Name tells you how holy you can be, how prosperous you can be, how generous, how happy and joyful, how much peace you can have, and how much freedom you can have.

That is what faith is really all about. We see the Victor. We have a firm conviction, unshakable confidence, and indisputable expectation that all God

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has said, in His Word, is established forever through Jesus, and will come to pass.

We must see Jesus at work in us. We must refuse to see arthritis or cancer or diabetes or asthma. Jesus is perfection, He is life, He is light and He is health. All of the cells in our body will align themselves to His will and to His purpose for us, as we see Jesus.

We should never feel defeated. It says, "Give no place to the devil." (Ephesians 4:27). We are made to win. Let us keep our eyes on the One winner who paid for our victory. He is triumphed over principalities... It is done, and in the past, therefore it is real and it is here.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (seen through the eyes of faith) (John 20:29).

"But without faith (seeing Jesus) it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him". (Hebrews 11:6)

"But let him ask in faith (seeing Jesus'victory) nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." (James 1:6)

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith (seeing the victory) giving glory to God". (Romans 4:20)

"And he did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." (They did not see Him as the Christ.) (Matthew. 13:58).

Christians are called to enforce the victory of the cross, and that is where our prayer life begins. Through His resurrection, Jesus changed our standing, our authority, and our access to the Father. Prayer opens the way for that victory to be expressed and pushes back the world of darkness.

Knowing that He has promised to provide all our needs does not require us to beg Him. It calls us to thank Him for His many promises. God has supplied everything through His grace, so prayer takes on a new meaning.

We are not to beg God for anything He has already provided through His grace. We are to thank Him. And when He has already given us responsibility and authority, we are to command those things in the name of Jesus. Prayer is

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war, but we are not fighting God and we are not begging God. We are standing with God against the oppressor and enforcing the victory of Christ.

The god of this world has been dethroned by the Son of God and we are the enforcers of that victory. The freed have become the free-ers.

Prayer is one of the means God has chosen to work through us. In the book of Acts, every invasion of God's people with the message of the gospel was always preceded by prayer. Prayer is reclaiming the kingdom of heaven by force, "and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12b). Prayer oftentimes requires wrestling (Colossians 4:12). We often have to put our shoulder to the boulder in persistence and perseverance until we get the answer.

Faith does not ever give up; or else it wasn't genuine faith in the first place. Faith has the ability to see the end from the beginning and it never lets go. The devil fights a praying man most because he knows that God has hardwired the universe to work through prayer when He said, "Ask and you shall receive" (Matthew 7:7). It is the prayer of faith that brings the end of impossible before us.

We sometimes tend to use prayer as our last resort, but it ought to be our first line of offense. We ought not to resort to prayer because there's nothing else we can do, but we ought to pray before we do anything else. "Everyone that asks receives" (Matthew 7:8). That's the childlike faith that we ought to have.

Faith is the fuel of prayer and it brings us before the omnipotence of God. God holds Himself ready to supply exactly and fully all the demands of faith in prayer. "He will have whatsoever he says" (Mark 11:23).

The keynote of prayer is "have faith in God" for "he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Prayer is made strong by the Word. Again, God loves for you to remind Him of His promises because it proves your trust in His Word. God has confined Himself and His operations to our faith and to our prayers in the name of Jesus.

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**Matthew 21:22** All things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.

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**Hebrews 11:6** But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

**James 5:16b** The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

**Psalms 116:1, 2** I love the Lord, because He has heard My voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.

**2 Samuel 22:7** In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears.

**Isaiah 30:19b** He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.

**Isaiah 65:24** It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.

**Jeremiah 33:3** Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

**Psalms 50:15** Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.

**Psalms 91:15a** He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.

**Matthew 6:6b** But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father Who is in the secret place; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you openly.

**Matthew 7:7-8** Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

**John 15:7** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

**Romans 8:34** It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

**Psalms 22:24** For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard.

**Psalms 55:17** Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice.

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**Psalms 62:8** Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.

**Psalms 102:17** He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer.

**Psalms 119:10** With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!

**Lamentations 2:19a** Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.

**Jeremiah 29:13** And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

**John 14:14** If you ask anything in My name, I will do it

**Hebrews 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**1 Thessalonians 5:17** Pray without ceasing.

**1 john 5:14-15** Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

**Isaiah 45:11b** Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons; And concerning the work of My hands, you command Me.

**Psalms 66:18-19** If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

Mt 18:19-20 If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

**Romans 8:26** Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

# Unashamedly Christianity



Picture this: you are at work, and someone makes a joke about faith. Your heart starts racing. Do you speak up, or do you stay quiet? That split-second decision may seem small, but it reveals something important. It shows whether we are bold believers or what I call “chameleon Christians,” those who blend into their surroundings and change colors to match whatever crowd they are in.

Let us be real - many of us have become masters of spiritual camouflage. We are like those Jewish leaders in Jesus'time who believed in Him but wouldn't say it out loud. The Bible tells us they "would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise from men more than the praise from God" (John 12:42-43). Sound familiar?

Think about the early Christians for a moment. These folks weren't trying to fit in - they were turning their world upside down! (Acts 17:6). Paul, Peter, Stephen, Philip - these names echo through history not because they played it safe, but because they dared to be different. They were not worried about their Instagram followers or what their colleagues might think.

Want to see what playing it safe looks like? Meet Naaman from the Old Testament. Here was a guy who could have influenced an entire nation - Syria's top general, second only to the king. After God miraculously healed his leprosy, he knew the truth about the one true God. But when push came to shove, what did he do? He compromised. When the king asked him to worship in the pagan Temple of Rimmon, he caved, pleading, "The Lord pardon thy servant in this one thing that I do" (2 Kings 5:18). Talk about a missed opportunity!

Here is the thing - Jesus did not mince words about this halfway stuff. He said, "He that is not for Me is against Me" (Matthew 12:30). There is no spiritual Switzerland here - no neutral ground. You are either in or you are out. Jesus even said He would rather have us hot or cold than lukewarm, warning that He will "spew" the lukewarm out of His mouth (Revelation 3:15-16). Pretty strong words from the Prince of Peace!

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Think about Jesus Himself. He “made Himself of no reputation” (Philippians 2:7), and Isaiah said He was “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). He was not concerned with reputation, popularity, or public image. Yet many believers today are afraid to be known as followers of Jesus, even in the smallest public ways.

Let me share a story that puts this in perspective. There was once an elderly woman whose son became the U.S. Ambassador to England, at the time one of the most prestigious diplomatic posts in the world. Instead of celebrating, she nearly wept and said, “To think that he might have become an ambassador of Christ, and he dwindled down to nothing but an ambassador to England.”

That hits hard because this is what it comes down to: “This is how we know what God’s love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1 John 3:16). We are not only talking about laying down physical life. We are talking about laying down pride, fear of man, the craving for approval, and the desire to fit in.

The world doesn't need more 007 agents for Jesus, trying to smuggle their own souls into heaven without anyone noticing. It needs bold believers who are willing to stand out, speak up, and shine bright. After all, you are not just any ambassador – you are an ambassador of the King of Kings, representing the greatest kingdom that will ever exist.

So here is the real question: Will you keep trying to blend in, or will you stand up and stand out for Jesus? The position of heaven's ambassador is open and waiting. The choice is yours.

# Live Out Your Inheritance



The ONE thing that can keep you from being a totalwinner and living a winning lifestyle everyday is if you have a foot in the world and a foot in the kingdom of God.

Look at it this way, Jesus has already won. He said, “All power is given to Me in heaven and earth.” (Matthew 28:18-20) He totally disarmed the devil. But for us, the key to also be fully empowered, and fully winning, is if we fully follow in His footsteps. He said, “Therefore goand make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

That is what discipleship is all about. It is walking out His teachings every day. It is letting Jesus have full control of our lives. It is living out the inheritance given to us in the new birth as sons and daughters of God on the earth, equipped to enforce the victory and authority of God’s Kingdom, not only in our own lives, but also around us, by destroying the works of the devil. We have been given power in Christ to do that.

But the main requirement is that we shun the things of the world and live by the Word and ways of God. Jesus said, “I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14 to 16).

The whole world is waiting for Christians to manifest Christ. Paul said, “For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.” (Romans 8:19) There would be a very different world if all of us Christians were to walk in the full fullness of Christ. –If we were all, on a daily basis, doing what Jesus did: “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.” (Acts

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10:38) There would be no sick people, no demon possessed people, and all would come to us to find out how we are able to do that. Where do we get the power, and the authority?

Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest of all prophets. “For I say unto you, among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” (Luke 7:28) --Why? Because Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit, and His power, His authority to destroy the works of the devil, and to be a light in the midst of darkness, the same as He was.

When you really think about it, that is astonishing. And there is more. Jesus said that many prophets and kings longed to see the day we are now living in, when God’s children would be fully equipped and empowered. He said, “For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them” (Luke 10:24).

Does that not make you want to become all that God has called you to be? Get hold of your Bible. Absorb the full truth about your new identity, understand your authority in Christ, and start living it out. Resources like the Handbook of a Disciple of Jesus can help you gather the Scriptures and begin practicing them daily. Faith is walking out what appears impossible to man but is possible with God. Jesus said, “For with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). We should stop treating impossibilities as greater than God.

Jesus said, “Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him” (Mark 11:22 to 23). But the key is to stay clear of the things of the world. James said, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Check out these verses to add a little more conviction to your faith:

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“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away

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along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” (1 John 2:15-17)

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)

“Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him Who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” (2 Timothy 2:4-6)

“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.” (Mark 4:19)

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (Galatians 5:1)

### God doesn't Use Perfect People

Have you ever wondered what God's master plan for your life looks like? It begins with two simple words: “I will.” Those words may seem small, but they carry great spiritual weight. They are the beginning of surrender. They are the first step toward becoming more like Jesus. To say “I will” to God means letting go of our own agenda and yielding ourselves to His purpose. It may be costly, but it is always worth it.

Think about this: you are already doing ministry when you are using those unique gifts God gave you to help others. Whether you are cooking meals for a sick neighbor or listening to a friend going through tough times – that is ministry in action. You see, God did not design us to be cosmic couch potatoes, just taking up space in the universe. He crafted each of us with precision and purpose, like an artist creating a masterpiece. And the best part? It is all flowing from His endless mercy.

As Paul beautifully puts it in Romans 12:1-2, "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper service [ministry]. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

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Let us correct a common misunderstanding. People often speak about God's "second best" for their lives, as if His will is divided into gold, silver, and bronze levels of purpose. But in God's Kingdom, there is only the high calling of God in Christ. Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). When we settle for less, we are not walking in God's second best. We are mixing His perfect will with our own imperfect desires. That is why Hebrews 12:1 tells us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." A runner cannot run freely while carrying unnecessary weight.

Here is something liberating: your worth is not tied to your work performance! You do not need to climb the corporate ladder to reach God's approval rating. Your value comes from three unshakeable facts: God made you, loves you, and sent Jesus to pay an astronomical price for you. Understanding this mercy is like being released from a lifetime contract of trying to prove yourself.

And those mistakes that keep trying to haunt you are not stronger than God's mercy. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." We have all failed. But God's mercy cleanses what guilt keeps rehearsing. When the accuser reminds you of your past, you can answer with confidence: "You may know my past, but I know your future." Your history does not have the final word. Jesus does.

And here is more encouraging news: God has a long record of using imperfect people to accomplish extraordinary things.

Jacob was a deceiver, yet God made him a patriarch.

Rahab had a broken past, yet she became part of the lineage of Jesus.

Jonah was reluctant and resistant, yet God used him to preach repentance to a city.

Samson had great strength but weak discipline, yet God still used him for deliverance.

Martha struggled with worry, yet Jesus loved her and taught her.

The Samaritan woman had a painful relational history, yet she became a witness to her city.

Peter was impulsive and unstable at times, yet he became a bold apostle.

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Moses, David, and Paul all had serious failures in their past, yet God used them mightily.

The only thing that can truly block God's purpose in your life is your own will standing in the way. But through His mercy, we are no longer our own. We are free to live out the purpose He designed for us. It is as though the Author of life has placed in our hands the role we were created to fulfill. The question is whether we will say, "I will," and surrender fully to Him.

# Why Silence Isn't An Option



Imagine you are standing on a highway and see a massive accident ahead. Would you simply walk away, knowing dozens of drivers are speeding toward disaster? Of course not. You would wave your arms, flash lights, shout, and do whatever you could to warn them. That would not merely be kindness. It would be a moral obligation.

Now consider this sobering thought: as believers, we stand at a similar crossroads every day. We have been rescued from a spiritual collision course and brought into new life through Christ. Yet how often do we watch others rush past us toward eternal separation from God while we hold the life-saving truth in our hearts?

This is not merely my opinion. God speaks about this responsibility with sobering clarity in Ezekiel 3:17 to 19: “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me. When I say unto the wicked, ‘Thou shalt surely die’; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”

No one can relate better to this concept of being compelled than a mother. Her love for her kids is so intense that she is compelled into caring for them, and she does so, 365/24/7. She may have been just a teenager wrapped up in her own world before, but the minute she has a baby, she changes into this love machine, and sacrifice becomes her way of life, she will do anything to love that baby. She will care so much and so long, tirelessly and relentlessly. No one in his right mind would even take on the role of a mother, working hour after hour, slaving away for her kids and for her husband, and without money, without days off, without vacations. The mother is really the servant of all. Why? Because she feels compelled to do it.

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The word “compel” means more than being pushed into an action. Like the love of a mother, it speaks of an inner force that moves you from the inside. It is an inward strength that generates motivation, courage, endurance, and even physical strength. This is the word Paul used when he explained his motivation for preaching the Gospel. He said, “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:14 to 15).

This compelling love is true, unselfish love. Jesus illustrated this perfectly when He compared a hired shepherd to a true shepherd. The hired hand runs when wolves appear, but the true shepherd stays and fights for his sheep, even at the cost of his life (John 10:7 to 18). That is the difference between mere obligation and love-driven purpose.

Paul understood the futility of life without Christ and the emptiness of trying to produce righteousness through self-effort. Even when the people he preached to were hostile, even when they rejected him, mocked him, and called him insane, the love of Christ compelled him to keep putting the message of hope before them.

Christ's love drove him forward like an unstoppable force. He understood something profound: whether we are moved by Christ's incredible love for us or our immense appreciation and love for Him, either motivation is powerful enough to change lives.

Here is the beautiful truth: you do not need a sales pitch to share God's love. People are already searching for what you have—meaning, purpose, truth. As Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). You are not selling anything; you are offering living water to thirsty souls.

Remember Jesus'first and final commands? He began with "Come follow Me and I'll make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19) and ended with the Great Commission: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, GO and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19).

The need is real and urgent. I have a dear friend who is a missionary in Nicaragua, and he recently told me, “Our biggest need is not money. It is people willing to come help disciple new believers.” This is our calling: to be

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daily cross-bearers. Jesus said, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

We have been given an incredible gift in Jesus. Should we not be overflowing with desire to share this joy with others? Each of us has a story of God’s grace to tell. Each of us has been positioned as an ambassador of hope in a world desperate for good news.

(For those who want to study this responsibility further, Mark Cahill’s book *The Watchmen* is a helpful resource on the believer’s call to warn, witness, and speak.)

Remember, God may use your willingness to speak today to reach someone who desperately needs the truth. What could be more important than that? Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). If love truly compels us, then we cannot remain silent.

# The Power Of Memorizing God's Word



Think of Scripture memorization as building your spiritual arsenal—not just storing facts but embedding living power within your heart. This is not just another self-improvement technique; it is tapping into the very breath of God. When Jesus faced Satan in the wilderness, He did not improvise—He declared, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Actually, he quoted scriptures nearly 180 times throughout His ministry.

Why is this practice so transformative? Because God's Word is not just ink on paper—it is "God-breathed" through the Holy Spirit. As 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

I can think of at least seven power-packed benefits of scripture memorization:

## It is Your Only Offensive Weapon

In the spiritual armor described in Ephesians 6:13,17, everything is defensive except one thing—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Think about that: in spiritual warfare, memorized Scripture is your laser-guided missile!

## It is Your Emergency Exit from Temptation

When temptation strikes, you would not have time to Google Bible verses. As Psalm 119:11 promises, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

## It Transforms Your Mind

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Want to break free from worldly thinking? Romans 12:2 shows us how: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Scripture memorization is like installing a spiritual firewall against toxic thoughts.

### It's Living and Active

**Hebrews 4:12** tells us that God's Word is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." When the Word is memorized, it becomes a constant guide, helping us discern our thoughts, motives, choices, and direction.

### It Powers Your Witness

As 1 Peter 3:15 commands, "Be ready always to give an answer." Memorized Scripture turns you into a walking lighthouse of truth.

### It Elevates Your Thinking

Scripture fills your mind with what Paul calls "whatsoever things are true... honest... just... pure... lovely... and of good report" (Philippians 4:8). The Word lifts your thoughts above fear, impurity, confusion, and worldly thinking.

### It Deepens Your Relationship with God

Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4 to 5). Memorizing Scripture helps the Word abide in you. It gives the Holy Spirit truth to bring to remembrance and keeps your heart in continual communion with the Lord.

Here are some memorization strategies.

#### The Basic Framework:

Dedicate 15 minutes first thing in the morning

Read your chosen verses aloud three times

Meditate deeply on each word

Review three times during the day

Recite before sleep

#### The Musical Method

Set verses to familiar tunes

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Create simple melodies for longer passages

Use rhythm and rhyme to enhance retention

The Visual Anchor

Create mental pictures for key phrases

Draw simple symbols next to verses

Use hand motions for important words

The Story Chain

Link verses to personal experiences

Create a narrative connecting multiple verses

Build memory palaces for chapter memorization

The Tech Boost

Use repetition apps

Record yourself reading verses

Set verse wallpapers on your devices

The Partner System

Find a memorization buddy

Practice reciting to each other

Share mnemonics and memory tricks

Remember God's direct commands about memorization: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth" (Joshua 1:8)

"Lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul" (Deuteronomy 11:18)

"I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget your Word" (Psalm 119:16)

Start small, but start today. Begin with one verse a day. As you build this spiritual muscle, you will find yourself carrying not just words, but the living

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power of God in your heart. Every mighty oak began as a single seed. Plant God's Word in your heart, and watch it grow into a fortress of faith.

For additional resources, check out the "Power ForThe Hour" memorization booklet at [FaithWithoutBorders.US](http://FaithWithoutBorders.US), and explore practical techniques for teaching children at [encouragingmomsathome.com/scripture-memory-techniques-ways-to-make-it-happen](http://encouragingmomsathome.com/scripture-memory-techniques-ways-to-make-it-happen).

# How Can You SPOT Those Christians?



How can you recognize a Christian from anyone else in society? What is different about them? Do they not live among other people, work in the same workplaces, and walk the same streets? If so, what makes their faith distinct? What should mark them as followers of Jesus?

Imagine a conversation taking place shortly after the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Two Roman officials are discussing this strange and growing movement of people who follow Jesus of Nazareth.

A new Roman governor was appointed in Jerusalem, by the name of Julius Alexis. When he arrived in Jerusalem, he met with his predecessor to find out more about the stories that he had been hearing regarding this group of religious fanatics, called the Christians. He had never met one, but had heard that they were followers of a 33-year-old man who had been crucified a few years previously by Pilate who was governor of Jerusalem, who himself had been enticed by the religious leaders to do away with him. Yet this one man alone had started a movement which was spreading throughout the whole Roman empire.

Those Christians were said to have power given to them by this Messiah of the Jews. Troubled about this revolutionary group who played an important part in Jerusalem and the surrounding provinces, he asked his predecessor, “What is a Christian? What makes them a Christian? How do they act? And what power do they have?” In other words, how can one recognize one of those people?

He said, “I have heard all of the bad about them. I have heard that they are fanatics, bigoted, not interested in the power of Rome, but I have also heard that they are not violent, they ban together... and what else do you know about them?”

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Ben Hur replied, “Not only are they not violent, but they are compassionate and merciful. Not only towards each other, but even towards their enemies. They are long-suffering. Most of them are happy, joyous, exceedingly so, in fact.

“You try to catch them in the wrong, but to the contrary, they are truthful, honest citizens. They have integrity. They pay their taxes and are not greedy. Most of them are self-effacing, even though they speak their faith with boldness and authority. They take the lowest place in gatherings, and yet somehow they shine, as though they carry a light and a wisdom in their speech.

“They speak with love, as though they look at the heart when speaking to people rather than merely at the exterior of a man. They seem to possess so little, and yet they say they are rich in love, freedom, and peace.

“I met one of their leaders recently...a humble woman with kindness in word and in deed. She greeted me with a blessing. We ate together and she explained to me something about a corn of wheat dying in order to bear fruit. She was telling me how that is a principle, a moral law to live by--And they live to die to themselves so that their Christ, who apparently is resurrected, may live in them and through them.

“They live in hope, separated from the riches and the lusts of this world, as if they look at things that we cannot see. They believe in a spiritual world outside of the world that we see. They pray together, and they receive much persecution, but they have no fear. They are willing to die as martyrs for the sake of that kingdom of the spirit, as they call it. They call Christ, their King, that man who was crucified, whose body our soldiers could not find after three days.

“They say they are of royal blood, having been accepted into the Kingdom of Christ. You should hear them pray. They speak in strange tongues, and they praise their God, whom they say they love with great passion.

“They do not dress differently from anyone else. They are very united. They walk humbly, so there is little strife among them. They do not envy one another’s possessions, and they are not proud or judgmental. Even when you try to provoke them, they smile, as though they love and care for you. They may look meek, but they are like warriors: focused, disciplined, and steady.

## BEYOND THE PEW

‘They do not go to the doctor because most of them are healers through the authority that was given to them by Christ, their Messiah. They have healed many of our soldiers' families, even some of our slaves.

“You can also meet them in prisons... not as prisoners, but they go encourage and pray for them to be delivered and freed, not from prison as you might think, but from evil spirits.

“You meet them talking to the beggars...and even to the lepers. I have even seen one of them helping one of those dirty Samaritans, who had been wounded and was about to die, had he not been cared for, and that Christian even paid for his hospital bill.

“They are different, alright, because they do not desire any of the world that we Romans bring through the great teachings of the Emperor, the great Ceasar. But on the other hand, they respect our authority. They are weird to say the least. But they are peaceful. They don't lie, they don't steal, they do not vain babble. They speak evil of no one. They are kind towards to everyone and they forgive whoever might hurt them.

“Of all citizens, they are the ones that walk in love the most. They do not live in debauchery. I would call them brainwashed by this “Jesus doctrine”. And people do not like the fact that they are so close to each other, almost fitly joined to one another. They depend on each other. But on the other hand they are very outgoing and the most generous in our community. –Not only to the poor. This woman I had dinner with, paid for my dinner and gave the slave a handsome tip and talked to him as a dignified member of society and told him how God so loved him. -- a slave!

“They have beautiful families and their children are well behaved. You will never see them drunk, but sometimes you think they are! They sing and sing so loud!

“Of course we obey the orders of our Ceasar who has commanded us to kill as many of them in the arenas, but there are so many of them. We soak them in oil and tar, and hang them on a street pole and light them up. Lately we have used them as lanterns of fire to light up our streets at night. But I want you to be prepared, they sing hymns of praise to their God while they burn. And people are starting to get fed up hearing their loud happy songs while they are trying to sleep.

#### BEYOND THE PEW

“There is one thing I do not understand. They receive the strongest persecution from the religious leaders, the very ones who demanded the death of their Messiah. It is as though those leaders envy the freedom of these followers of Jesus. They call them a sect, little Christs. Yet of all the people in the city, they are among the least troublesome. They are different, yes, but their difference is not violence. It is love, joy, holiness, courage, mercy, and a strange power that Rome cannot explain.”

# Thoughts on Christianity



If you want to understand the difference between discipleship and church-only Christianity, it is simple. They may claim the same team, but they do not play the same role. Church-only Christians are fans of Jesus Christ. True disciples are players on the field with Jesus Christ. Jesus has always had more admirers than followers.

Faith makes a Christian. Life proves a Christian. Trial confirms a Christian. Death crowns a Christian.

Christ plus discipleship equals Christianity.

If your Christianity will not work where you are, it will not work anywhere.

A Christian is not a person who has made a new start in life, but a person who has received a new life to start with.

If you are a Christian, you are not a citizen of this world trying to get to Heaven; you are a citizen of Heaven drawing as many as you can out of this world.

Two marks of a Christian: giving & forgiving.

Is my religion a steering wheel, or only a spare wheel?

Believers are not hired servants, supporting themselves by their own work, but children maintained at their Father's expense.

Christianity is not about how to escape from the difficulties of life, but about how to face them.

C.S. Lewis wrote that Christianity is the story of the rightful King landing in disguise and calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.

Christianity can be condensed into four words: Admit, submit, commit, transmit.

## BEYOND THE PEW

It is good to be a Christian and know it, but it is better to be a Christian and show it.

A Christian is not necessarily a man who is better than someone else, but one who is better than he would be if he were not a Christian.

Some Christians wish to be counted in, but not to be counted on.

God is not only a present help in times of trouble, but also a great help in keeping us out of trouble.

A Christian has not lost the power to sin, but the desire to sin.

Satan is never too busy to rock the cradle of a sleeping Christian.

A real Christian is as horrified by his own sins as he is by his neighbour's.

Definition of a Christian:

He loves the truth and stands by it.

He knows the call and obeys it.

He hears a lie and slays it.

He loves God's Word and reads it.

He seeks God's will and heeds it.

If you want to defend Christianity, practice it.

Christianity requires the participants to come down from the grandstand and onto the playing field.

Satan is perfectly willing to have a person confess Christianity as long as he does not practice it.

A Christian is one who makes it easier for other people to believe in God.

What most Christians need is fewer platitudes & better attitudes.

A lukewarm Christian may make a good benchwarmer, but a poor heart-warmer.

# About The Author



Picture this: It is 1972, and a young couple steps out in faith, not knowing their "yes" to God would spark a 45-year adventure that would touch thousands of lives across multiple continents. That is where Paul Joseph's and his wife Linda's story begins—but it certainly does not end there.

Through scorching African heat and the heart-wrenching realities of Liberian refugee camps, they have lived out what it means to be Christ's hands and feet in our broken world. After two decades in Asia, they spent yet another decade in Africa pouring their lives into these displaced communities, turning a refugee camp into spaces of hope and healing. Their work was not just about providing physical aid—it was about showing people that even in life's darkest hours, God's light still shines.

But Paul's ministry extends beyond the mission field. His pen has become as powerful as his presence, most notably through his transformative work, "Handbook for a Disciple of Jesus." This is not just another Christian living book—it is a practical roadmap for anyone serious about following Jesus and helping others do the same. Think of it as a field manual for modern-day disciples, written by someone who's walked the walk for over four decades.

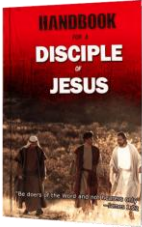
The handbook is just the beginning. Paul's library of books and daily devotionals continues to light the way for believers worldwide, offering practical wisdom forged in the fires of real-world ministry. His writings do

## BEYOND THE PEW

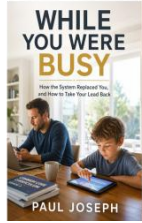
not just tell you what to do—they show you how to do it, drawing from frontline experience in disciple-making.

Want to dive deeper into these resources and discover tools for your own spiritual journey? Visit [faithwithoutborders.us](http://faithwithoutborders.us) to explore Paul's complete collection of works and ministry resources.

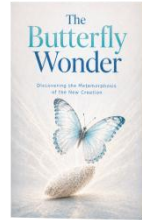
# Other Books by Paul



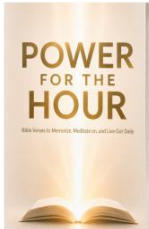
The Handbook for a Disciple of Jesus



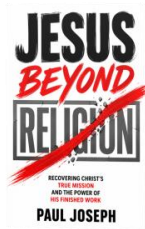
While You Were Busy



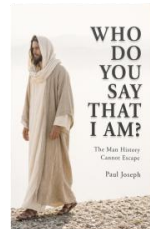
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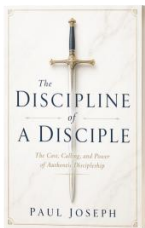
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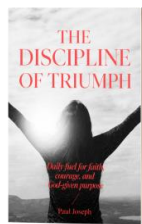
Jesus Beyond Religion



Who Do You Say That I Am



The Discipline of a Disciple



The Discipline of Triumph

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***Beyond The Pew: A Call To Authentic Discipleship*** is a bold, practical, Spirit-filled call for Christians to stop sitting, watching, and calling that discipleship.

This book is not written for comfortable Christianity. It is a call to move beyond passive religion, beyond cultural Christianity, beyond “churchianity,” and into the life Jesus actually commanded.

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The message is clear: Christianity is not a spectator sport. Jesus called believers to follow Him, obey Him, love like Him, pray like sons and daughters, witness without shame, destroy the works of the devil, make disciples, and bear fruit that remains.

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Awakening must be disciplined. Fire must be trained. Converts must become disciples. And disciples must become disciplers. One yielded believer can change more than he realizes when obedience becomes intentional discipleship.

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This book is for believers who know Jesus deserves more than attendance. It calls Christians to love, pray, speak, serve, fight, lead, witness, disciple, and multiply.

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**The time for lukewarm faith is over.**

**The time for silence is over.**

**It is time to move *beyond the pew.***

