



The
DISCIPLINE
of
A DISCIPLE

*“Why do you call me,
‘Lord, Lord’ and do not
do what I say?”*

- Luke 6:46

PAUL JOSEPH

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Preface



This book was written as a call back to the real meaning of Christianity.

Not church attendance alone. Not religious language. Not comfortable belief without obedience. Not admiration of Jesus from a distance. Christianity, as Jesus taught it, is discipleship. It is following Him, obeying His Word, denying self, walking in love, standing for truth, and carrying His light into a dark world.

The Discipline of a Disciple is not written to entertain passive believers. It is written to awaken followers. It is a challenge to leave the grandstand, come onto the field, and live the life Jesus actually called us to live.

A disciple is not perfect, but he is decided. He may still be growing, learning, correcting, and being trained, but his direction has been settled. He belongs to Jesus. He follows the Word. He refuses to be shaped by the world. He lives to bear fruit.

My prayer is that as you read these pages, your faith will be stirred, your courage will be strengthened, and your love for Jesus will become practical, visible, and bold. May this book help you not only believe the truth, but live it.

Because Christianity was never meant to remain hidden.

It was meant to be seen.

Introduction



In every generation, the call of Jesus remains the same: “Follow Me.” Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (**Matthew 4:19**). He did not call people to admire Him from a distance, attend meetings about Him, or carry the name Christian without carrying His life. He called disciples. The Discipline of A Disciple is a call back to that original standard, the life of following Jesus in truth, obedience, love, power, and daily surrender.

Many sincere believers have inherited a version of Christianity that taught them how to attend, but not how to follow. This book is not written to condemn them. It is written to recover what Jesus actually commanded. The goal is not to attack the wounded, but to expose the deceptions, distractions, and powerless traditions that have kept many from walking in the fullness of Christ. Jesus said, “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” (**John 8:31-32**).

Within these pages, you will be challenged to move beyond mere belief and into dedicated action. The Word of God does not call us to be hearers only. It calls us to be doers. “But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (**James 1:22**). This book draws from Scripture, the example of Jesus, the pattern of the early disciples, and real experiences from a life of mission and obedience to show what discipleship looks like when it is actually lived.

At its core, this book is a roadmap for the believer who refuses to settle for passive Christianity. It is for the heart that longs to know God more deeply, and for the spirit that wants to find its place in His divine purpose. Prayer, study, fellowship, witness, service, obedience, and sacrifice are not religious burdens. They are the training ground of the disciple. They are the pathways through which Christ forms His life in us and releases His love through us. 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**).

Discipleship is not meant to be lived alone. We are members of one body, called to strengthen one another, sharpen one another, and provoke one another to love and good works. The Bible tells us, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (**Hebrews 10:24**). In a world desperate for light, the body of Christ must stand together as a living witness of the truth.

Whether you are a new believer taking your first steps of faith or a seasoned Christian who knows there must be more than church attendance and religious

routine, The Discipline of A Disciple invites you to answer the call of Jesus again. May these pages stir you, confront you, strengthen you, and equip you to become the disciple Christ has called you to be, marked by love, faithfulness, obedience, courage, and unwavering boldness.

The call has not changed. Jesus still says, “Follow Me.”

Welcome to The Discipline of A Disciple.

Jesus Took Love to a Whole New Level!



Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (**John 13:34-35**).

After the fall of Adam, mankind still carried a measure of love because man was created in the image of God, and “God is love” (**1 John 4:8**). God has always reached out to humanity through His mercy, His Word, His Son, and His Spirit to reveal His eternal love. He said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (**Jeremiah 31:3**). But through Jesus, God brought back to man the fullness of divine love, the love that had been lost through separation from Him: agape love, the very nature of God.

The love manifested in human nature is often called phileo love. This love can be powerful because all true love has its origin in God. We see it in a mother’s heart toward her child, in a husband’s devotion to his wife, and in the affection between brothers, sisters, and family. Yet human love, as deep and sincere as it may be, is limited when it is not governed by the love of Jesus. Because of the fall, human love can become possessive, wounded, selfish, jealous, and easily offended. The same affection that should bring unity can deteriorate into division, bitterness, unforgiveness, and sorrow when self remains at the center. Human love can be powerful, but without agape, it is still fragile.

Self is at the center of fallen human love. But God is at the center of agape love. Human love can fail, but agape love never fails. You cannot produce agape love without God’s divine nature. It cannot be put on, manufactured, or faked. It is the heart of God beating in a renewed, born-again heart. “We love Him, because He first loved us” (**1 John 4:19**).

Jesus brought a love that “seeketh not her own.” It is tender, forbearing, long-suffering, kind, and unselfish. It seeks the joy and welfare of others. It mirrors the very nature of God. This love cannot operate from the natural heart alone. It flows from the re-created heart, the manifested love of God in the heart of the new man. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (**1 John 4:9**).

Agape love is the badge of true Christian discipleship. It is the kind of love that elevates Christianity above religion.

The apostle Paul understood this new law of love. He spelled it out clearly in 1 Corinthians 13: “Love suffers long and is kind; love envies not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Love does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, and thinks no evil. Love rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails” (**1 Corinthians 13:4-8**).

Paul is basically saying that without agape love, all teaching, preaching, knowledge, revelation, prophecy, learning, and spiritual activity amount to nothing (**1 Corinthians 13:1-3**). Then he shows what this love looks like in practice. The love of God in us makes it possible to suffer long, refuse envy, reject pride, and stop living for ourselves. It teaches us not to behave rudely, not to seek our own way, not to be easily provoked, not to live offended, not to gossip, and never to rejoice in lies.

Agape is the new law. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (**John 13:34**).

Agape love brings joy, beauty, peace, understanding, and compassion into a person’s life. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

It is agape love that forgives enemies: “Then said Jesus, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’” (**Luke 23:34**).

Agape love gives you a heart to pray while being persecuted, without fear. Jesus said, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine 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 5:43-44**).

It is agape love that clothes bravery in humility and strength in gentleness. The Word says, “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him” (**2 Chronicles 16:9**).

It is agape love that makes the strong bear the burdens of the weak. “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 makes a person care for the poor, honor the overlooked, and walk with the simple without pride or superiority. “Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion

from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:17-18).

It is agape love that manifests Jesus among men. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:39).

It is agape love that takes jealousy out of love, envy out of competing, anger out of conversation, and pride out of teaching. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23).

It is agape love that brings unity in families, strengthening them for all that God created them to be. “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14).

In conclusion, let us not live within the limitations of human love. We have been empowered with a greater love. Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Let us operate in the agape kind of love. Let us deny ourselves. Let us lay down our lives for others. This is the love of the Holy Spirit of God, “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5). This is how the world recognizes the true disciple: not by religious appearance, but by the love of Christ made visible.

Activate Your Faith



I first met the Lord in 1972 while traveling on my own throughout Europe. I was a hippie then, and I had decided to take one year out of college to search for the truth. A series of events led me to Amsterdam, where I met some “Jesus people.” They were living together in one large house. I had been raised around “churchianity,” so I definitely had reservations about anything connected to Jesus. But seeing them in action changed everything. I received the Lord, I was born again, and I received the Holy Spirit. What was so different about them was that they were doers. They talked about Jesus to anyone and everyone they met on the streets. They took the Bible literally and were living the words of Jesus.

During the first three months of my born-again experience, I had Bible classes and read the Word for half of the day. Then I went out witnessing in parks, public squares, and everywhere else the rest of the day. We went out two by two, as Jesus sent His disciples. “And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits” (**Mark 6:7**).

I thank God for that training because, from the start, it impressed upon me my new purpose in life as a born-again believer. I was not just saved and handed a free ticket to heaven. I was commissioned to bring as many souls with me as I could.

Going out witnessing was not optional in my training. Everyone was involved in telling others about Jesus every day. In the evening, we all shared testimonies: souls saved, lives touched, and more young people wanting to serve the Lord full time. The team grew in size every day, and we were making disciples with those new converts.

I encourage you to put this kind of action into your regular routine. Pair up with someone and make a deliberate plan to go out with the purpose of sharing the Gospel with others. Go two by two, whether with your spouse, your son or daughter, a friend, or a new convert you are teaching.

Here are two reasons why it is important to go two by two:

Jesus sent His disciples two by two so that if one became distracted from the goal, the other would be there to lift him up and help him stay focused. The Bible says, “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he has not another to help him up” (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**).

Jesus also explained the power of agreement 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**). He then added, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (**Matthew 18:20**).

Having at least one partner strengthens your commitment and your decision. It is not only a commitment before the Lord; it also gives you a witness who can help you stay true to the mission and resist the distractions and compromises of the enemy.

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 10:3-4**).

Because the enemy fights against this kind of obedience, you will be hit with all kinds of reasons why you and your team should not go out. Paul said, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (**2 Corinthians 2:11**). You may suddenly remember other “important” things to do. You may feel inspired to tackle tasks you have been procrastinating on. The enemy works hard to keep believers from becoming doers of the Word. So commit in your heart, stay focused, and do not allow yourself to deviate.

The goal is to make it a habit to shine your light regularly. You want to grow to the place where you naturally let people know that God loves them. You will find ways to let the Lord manifest that love through a listening ear, guidance, encouragement, and prayer for healing or deliverance. The apostles said, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (**Acts 4:20**).

Here are a few tips about approaching people. There are many different scenarios when meeting someone for the first time, and the most important thing is to be led by the Holy Spirit. But these simple practices can help you shine more naturally. Jesus said, “You are the light of the world...” (**Matthew 5:14-16**).

I often put myself out on a limb by saying things that naturally lead me to share about the Lord. People usually ask, “How are you doing?” I take that greeting as a real question, and I may answer with something like:

“I’m happy. Be careful, it is contagious.”

“I’m living the dream, and I dream big.”

“I’m blessed and grateful. God has been good to me.”

“I’ve been hearing nothing but good news.”

“I’m bursting with joy, unspeakable joy.”

“I found the love I had been looking for.”

I start the conversation with something that puts me in a position where I must explain more, or where they naturally ask what I mean. From there, I usually talk about one of God’s wonderful spiritual laws:

The POWER of words. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (**Proverbs 18:21**).

The POWER of praise. “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me” (**Psalms 50:23**).

The POWER of generosity. “Give and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over shall men give into your bosom” (**Luke 6:38**).

The POWER of forgiveness. “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**).

The POWER of love. “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. “for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble” (**1 Peter 5:5**)

God has established spiritual and physical principles in His creation, and His Word reveals how those principles bless us and those around us. Using Scripture to support what you are saying is one of the most powerful ways to witness. “The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword...” (**Hebrews 4:12**). For this reason, I carry my booklet, Handbook for a Disciple of Jesus, so I can show people the verses and read them together. Letting them read the Word with you helps them see God’s truth for themselves and understand how His ways work in our lives. This way, the conversation naturally comes back to Jesus.

It is important to find a moment to pray for the person before leaving. You can ask if they have a health need or something they would like prayer for. If they do, ask permission to pray, and if appropriate, ask whether you may lay hands on them. Then pray with faith and command sickness to leave in the name of Jesus. If they have no personal need, they may have a friend or relative who needs prayer. When we allow the Holy Spirit to minister through us in prayer, He often reaches people in a deeply personal way.

Bringing someone to the Lord who is not born again is so important. Ask them if they would like to ask the Lord to reveal Himself to them. The Bible says, “A true witness delivereth souls” and “he that winneth souls is wise” (**Proverbs 14:25; 11:30**). I usually ask if they would like to turn over the steering wheel of their life to the Lord and make Him the captain of their destiny.

I also try to bless them with a gift. Remember, God is a giver. 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 to 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 has done for you? Then let that gratitude move you to share His love with others. Commit now. Decide now. Pair up with someone, choose a time, and make a plan.

Let’s do it. As you step out, you will be amazed at what God will do to show His love to this world. Remember, we have already won in Christ. The victory is ongoing, and the harvest is waiting to be gathered.

The Gift of Boldness



Boldness is one of the great gifts the Holy Spirit empowers us with: unashamed courage to speak and stand for Jesus. Jesus said, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me” (**Acts 1:8**). That power is not only for private devotion. It is power to witness. It gives us the conviction to speak out and stand up for what is true, righteous, and loving. This is why Christians must learn to speak their faith without shame.

Biblical boldness is not arrogance. It is not loudness, argument, or religious pride. Boldness is love that refuses to hide. It is truth spoken with courage. It is compassion that will not stay silent while people are trapped in darkness. The enemy has worked hard to make believers feel that silence is humility, but the book of Acts shows us something different. When the disciples were threatened, they did not pray for comfort. They prayed for boldness. “Grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word” (**Acts 4:29**). And after they prayed, “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness” (**Acts 4:31**).

If you truly believe in something, it will show in the way you live and in your demeanor. Your belief becomes a conviction of the heart, and you stand by it. The life of a Christian is a manifestation, an example of faith lived out. It shows the world who you are in love with. Most people will only believe the Bible if it is bound in shoe leather, meaning if you walk it out. They will believe it when they see you live it. Once your heart has been filled with the love of God, you will want to do unto others as has been done unto you. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (**Matthew 5:16**).

You want others to partake of His lovingkindness. It goes further than telling them about God’s love. You can become the love of God expressed to them in many ways: helping, listening, understanding, forgiving, teaching, nurturing, healing, guiding, comforting, counseling, and giving. The list goes on.

Here is the easiest way to start: commit today to encourage everyone you meet. Encouragement is often the first door boldness walks through. A kind word, a blessing, a prayer, or a simple reminder that God loves someone can open the heart for deeper truth. Start there, and let the Holy Spirit lead you further.

Walk Out Your Faith



As Christians, we are born again, and when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, we are indwelt and empowered by the Spirit of Christ. “Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit” (**1 John 4:13**). We are totally new creatures, living in a different Kingdom, bearing a different passport, no longer slaves, but sons, daughters, and victors. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). We walk in the new identity restored to us by God’s Son. “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 5:10**).

We are a royal priesthood, and we now enjoy the inheritance of Christ: His righteousness, His life, and His authority. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath 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. We are empowered to enforce the will of the Father on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus said, “Behold, I give unto you power over all the power of the enemy” (**Luke 10:19**).

The life of a disciple of Christ requires commitment and dedication. We cannot be mere observers, part of the curious crowd that does not last. In John 6:30-56, Jesus declared that He is the Bread of heaven and that no one could have true life apart from Him. His words were hard for those who wanted miracles, bread, and benefits without surrender. Then John records, “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him” (**John 6:66**).

When some disciples turned back, Jesus turned to those who remained and said, “Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the Words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life” (**John 6:61-63**). Jesus was letting them know that there would be hard sayings ahead, but that the Spirit of God would give them life and strength to obey. He would not ask anything of His disciples that did not first flow from His own obedience to the Father. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (**John 5:19**). Jesus was imitating the Father.

So Jesus commanded us to follow Him and to be imitators of Him as He was of the Father. Jesus told the disciples, “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (**John 13:15**). And the apostle Peter said, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (**1 Peter 2:21**). That is the true meaning of discipleship.

Discipleship is not only learning as a student. It is putting the teachings and discipline of Jesus into practice. You can study the Gospels day after day, dig into the meaning of every verse, and study Greek and Hebrew for years, and those things can be valuable. But if the Word is never practiced, the power of the Gospel will not be seen in your life or in the lives of those around you. James said, “But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (**James 1:22**). A newborn believer filled with the Holy Spirit and acting on the Word can walk in more living power than a forty-year researcher who knows the text but never obeys it. The issue is not study. The issue is study without surrender, knowledge without obedience, and hearing without doing.

To walk out your faith means that what you believe becomes visible. It means the Word moves from your Bible to your behavior, from confession to action, from agreement to obedience. Faith that stays only in the mind remains unproven. Faith that steps out becomes a testimony.

Here are some guidelines to help each one of us put our faith into greater action. These are disciplines and practices that activate the disciple in us. They are simple ways to walk out what we believe:

Love: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (**John 13:34**).

Deny: “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, 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 is a joy to let your light shine. God’s light and love can be poured out to others. We can actually show the love of Christ wherever we go and with

whomever we meet. We can be imitators of Christ, applying His teachings in our lives, not only in theory, but by being doers of the Word.

Through the power of the Word and the help of the Holy Spirit, witnessing becomes possible, bold, and fruitful. Jesus promised His disciples power: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me... unto the uttermost part of the earth” (**Acts 1:8**).

You've Got the Power



Before Jesus began His ministry, He was baptized by John the Baptist, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. “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**).

When Jesus’ ministry on earth was finished and He was preparing to leave His disciples, He promised to send them the same Holy Spirit who had empowered His earthly ministry. That Spirit would dwell in them, comfort them, and empower them to continue His works in His name. 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. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth: ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:12, 16-18). Jesus was telling them that the Spirit who was with them would soon be in them.

With the Holy Spirit living in us, we are empowered to live as true disciples of Jesus. We are not trying to reproduce the life of Christ by human strength. The Holy Spirit in us makes it possible. This is one of the great reasons the Spirit of God was given to us: to form Christ in us and empower Christ through us.

Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem so that when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they would receive power to be His witnesses. “And, being assembled together with them, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost... But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me... unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:4-5, 8).

That was the main purpose of the Day of Pentecost, not merely the supernatural manifestations that took place. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was given to empower the disciples. The Holy Spirit empowers us with faith, courage, and boldness to stand for the truth and share our faith with others.

The power of the Holy Spirit is not spiritual entertainment. It is not given so believers can chase experiences while remaining passive. The Spirit empowers us to witness, to obey, to love, to heal, to serve, to stand, and to manifest the Kingdom of God. The enemy has worked hard to reduce Christianity either to

powerless religion or emotional experience without mission. But the book of Acts shows us the true pattern: Spirit-filled believers became bold witnesses of the risen Christ.

Jesus said that believers can receive the Holy Spirit by asking the Father in faith. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (**Luke 11:13**).

Now, get this: the Holy Spirit does not only empower us to witness and manifest the Kingdom of God; He also forms the character of Christ in us. Paul said, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (**Galatians 5:22-23**). The same Spirit who empowered the works of Jesus also produces the nature of Jesus in us.

The Holy Spirit does not only come upon us for outward power; He also works within us for inward transformation. He gives boldness to speak, power to witness, love to serve, wisdom to obey, and strength to endure. Power without love becomes noise. Love without power can become sentiment. But the Holy Spirit gives both: the love of Christ and the power of Christ, working together in the life of a surrendered disciple.

Read and absorb the following Scriptures so you can understand more fully the transformation and power the Holy Spirit brings.

Luke 11:13: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”

Acts 1:8: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me... unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

John 14:26: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

Ephesians 3:16: “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.”

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.

Galatians 5:22 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

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.

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 **PROPHECY,** 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.

How Your Miracles Will Happen



I learned a very important lesson from the Word in recent years concerning how much weight our words carry. This lesson became very personal in the area of my finances. I used to say negative things about my lack of finances, especially about my ability to make and manage money. I had started many businesses and ventures, yet I still could not seem to get ahead.

For the longest time, I saw myself as a begging missionary. I was involved in different aspects of missionary work for years, but I always saw myself as “in need.” I could hardly conceive the thought that I could become a giver or a lender. Yet the Bible says that God’s people are called to be “the head, and not the tail” (**Deuteronomy 28:13**), and that they would “lend unto many nations” and “not borrow” (**Deuteronomy 28:12**).

That fear of financial lack, along with the worried words we kept speaking, shaped our expectations and decisions. Over time, my wife and I found ourselves carrying debts we did not know how we could ever repay.

So, after digging into the Word on the subject of faith and provision, I made a concerted effort to change my attitude, especially the words coming out of my mouth concerning my finances. I began learning to call “those things which be not as though they were” (**Romans 4:17**).

In Mark 11:23, Jesus used the word “say” three times when speaking about the mountain being moved: “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 saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.”

Jesus taught that faith speaks. When our words agree with God’s Word and our hearts believe His promise, our speech becomes an expression of faith, not fear. Jesus said, “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (**Mark 11:24**). Notice that He said to believe when you pray. In other words, faith receives the promise before the eyes see the manifestation.

Unfortunately, we often look at circumstances only with our physical eyes, and that limits our faith. But the Word teaches us to agree with what God has spoken before we see it manifested. This truth from the Word became a revelation to me.

In the book of Romans, Paul explains this principle clearly. He refers to God speaking to Abram before he was named Abraham. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of many nations." The Lord said, "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 explains that God "calleth those things which be not as though they were" (**Romans 4:17**). God had already settled the matter when He spoke it to Abraham. Words spoken in agreement with God's promise are seeds, and they bear fruit in due season.

This is important because much of what grows in our lives is connected to the seeds we allow into our hearts and release from our mouths. When Jesus taught the parable of the sower, He showed that the Word is seed, and the condition of the heart determines the harvest (**Mark 4:13; Matthew 13:23**). Words are seeds. When our words are filled with fear, unbelief, bitterness, or defeat, they shape the atmosphere of our lives. But when our words agree with God's Word, they strengthen faith and prepare the ground for Kingdom fruit.

This is especially true when we use God's Word to proclaim 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 has to be fertile with FAITH. "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" (Mt 13:23).

To complain continually about our finances is like looking at parched ground and saying, "Nothing will ever grow here." That kind of speech agrees with lack instead of agreeing with God's provision. Instead, begin speaking God's Word over your finances. Speak with faith that the Lord is your provider, that He gives wisdom, that He teaches your hands to work, and that He can bless what He has called you to steward. This is part of renewing the mind. But you must renew your mouth too. Learn to speak what agrees with God. The Lord told Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night... for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (**Joshua 1:8**).

Jesus demonstrated authority over natural conditions when He turned water into wine. He told the servants, "Fill the waterpots with water," and then said, "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast" (**John 2:7-8**). What was ordinary water became wine under His command.

Jesus repeatedly released the will of God through words of faith and authority. He blessed the loaves and fishes, and they multiplied (**Matthew 14:19-20**). He called Lazarus out of the tomb (**John 11:40-43**). He spoke to the fig tree, and it withered (**Matthew 21:18-19**).

He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace, be still” (**Mark 4:39**).

He spoke healing and freedom to the sick and oppressed. Throughout His ministry, His words carried the authority of the Kingdom.

Remember when Jesus marveled at the centurion who said, “Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” The centurion understood authority. He said, “I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh” (**Luke 7:7-9**). Jesus marveled because the centurion understood that words spoken under authority carry power. This is connected to the principle of binding and loosing. Jesus said, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (**Matthew 18:18**). You must speak in faith under the authority of Christ.

You begin to walk in the authority of your Christian life when your words agree with God’s Word and your heart stands in faith. As a disciple, you are not speaking empty wishes. You are speaking under the authority of Christ. Let us commit to changing our speech. From here on, let us speak the desired end according to God’s Word and believe.

Call your body into alignment with God’s Word and Christ’s healing authority. Here is a sample confession of faith: “Body, I speak the Word of faith to you. I command every part of you to come into order according to the Word of God, for you are the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the authority of His Word, be healed and made whole.” The Bible says, “The tongue of the wise is health” (**Proverbs 12:18**).

Speak God’s provision over your finances. Jesus said, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (**Matthew 6:33**). Faith does not deny need. Faith puts the Kingdom first and trusts the Father to provide.

Speak God’s purpose over your children and loved ones. Pray that they will know the Lord, hear His voice, and walk in His destiny. The Word says, “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (**Isaiah 54:13**).

Call forth the harvest that agrees with God’s Word, God’s will, and God’s Kingdom purpose. Jesus said, “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (**Mark 11:24**). This is how faith participates with God’s promises. When you speak God’s will over your life, directed by His Word, you can expect His Word to work.

You must give voice to faith. It is not enough to merely wish for results. Faith speaks. God created by His Word, saying, “Let there be light” (**Genesis 1:3**), and

throughout Genesis 1 we see the creative authority of His speech. As those made in His image and born again in Christ, we are called to speak in agreement with His Word. We do not speak with independent power. We speak under the delegated authority of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 10:8 says, "The Word of God is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart." That is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim.

The Word of God in your mouth, when mixed with faith and spoken under the authority of Jesus, is one of the most powerful tools in the disciple's arsenal.

Casting Your Pearls Before Swine



Your time is a pearl.

Your calling is a pearl.

Your attention is a pearl.

Your obedience is a pearl.

Your Kingdom assignment is a pearl.

Success in life is a great achievement, but success in the wrong pursuit is the saddest tragedy of all. Time spent in pursuit of the wrong purpose, or without purpose entirely, is the greatest waste of human potential.

We all have a purpose specifically designed for us by God. When we follow that purpose, our lives become filled with joy, peace, and a sense of accomplishment. We gain wisdom, knowledge, and truth that we can share with others, and in doing so, we find fulfillment every day.

This is where the warning of Jesus becomes so important: “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine” (**Matthew 7:6**). In this chapter, the pearls represent the sacred things God has entrusted to us: our time, our calling, our attention, our energy, our obedience, and our Kingdom assignment. To cast those pearls before swine is to spend what is sacred on what cannot honor God, cannot bear fruit, and cannot serve the purpose for which we were created.

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus addressed the concerns and worries that often govern people’s lives. He taught us not to let legitimate needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter, become ruling anxieties. Instead, He commanded us to seek the Kingdom of God above all else, trusting that the Father knows what we need and will provide.

“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**).

What a radical approach to life, especially since many of us spend so much time worrying about countless things, building our priorities around them, and planning our days, and sometimes our entire lives, around those worries.

Worry is, in many ways, the opposite of seeking first the Kingdom of God. Worry tries to carry tomorrow without the Father. It attempts to figure out life apart from trust, prayer, obedience, and surrender. Even physically, prolonged worry and stress can wear down the body and affect health. But the deeper issue is spiritual: worry trains the heart to lean on human understanding instead of the Lord. The Word says, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (**Jeremiah 10:23**).

Jesus’ command to seek first the Kingdom of God changes everything about how we prioritize our lives. Interestingly, He never gave us a second priority or what some might call “God’s second best.” He said that if we seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness, the Father will take care of what we need. Jesus was not forbidding us from praying about daily needs, because He also taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (**Matthew 6:11**). But He was destroying the anxious spirit that makes food, clothing, rent, and survival the center of life. He was saying, “Set your heart on one thing: the Kingdom of God. Trust the Father with the rest.”

The Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus’ preaching. From the beginning of His ministry, He declared, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel” (**Mark 1:15**). Later, when the Pharisees demanded when the Kingdom of God should come, Jesus answered that it would not come with outward observation, because the Kingdom was already in their midst through the presence and ministry of the King.

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst” (**Luke 17:20-21**).

It had already begun right under their noses. The King was standing among them, bringing the Kingdom of God back to earth.

Jesus also taught that His miracles were evidence that the Kingdom of God had arrived: “If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you” (**Luke 11:20**). He demonstrated the Kingdom through acts of love, compassion, healing, deliverance, and authority. He emphasized the importance of seeking the Kingdom above all else. He compared it to a merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when he found one pearl of great price, “went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (**Matthew 13:45-46**). In other words, the Kingdom is worth everything.

So let’s add this up: the Kingdom was the central message of Jesus. He brought the Kingdom without worldly fanfare, political takeover, or religious spectacle. He revealed a reign that works from within, like leaven in dough. He taught that the Kingdom is the greatest treasure a person can find, worth

surrendering everything for. He commanded us to make the Kingdom and His righteousness our number one priority, trusting the Father to take care of the rest. And He showed through miracles, healing, and deliverance that the reign of God had begun on earth. So what is the message?

What does it mean for us to “seek first the Kingdom of God”? For us as believers, it means to live ready: ready to give, ready to love, ready to pray, ready to heal, ready to serve, and ready to destroy the works of the enemy in people’s lives. Jesus led by example in all these areas. He lived in obedience to His Father, loved people, healed the sick, delivered the oppressed, preached the Kingdom, and trained disciples to do the same.

To seek first the Kingdom means we prioritize God’s values over worldly values and possessions. It means we trust the Father to care for our needs while we focus on obedience to Jesus and the spread of the Gospel of the Kingdom. We are called to bring the Kingdom of God on earth in word and deed, by being doers of His teachings and by extending His Kingship wherever He sends us. That is our assignment. That is what we are to seek first: the Kingdom and His righteousness.

In reality, the Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus, and everything else flowed from that Kingdom message: healing, deliverance, provision, repentance, new birth, obedience, and discipleship. When He sent His disciples into the nearby towns, He told them, “As ye 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**).

This commission and priority from the Lord call for a re-examination of how we spend our time and what we prioritize in our lives. Time is one of our most valuable commodities, and spending it on fruitless activities is a serious waste. Many of our schedules are filled with tasks, habits, and distractions that do not bear good fruit.

I am convinced that keeping people occupied with pointless activities is one of the enemy’s most effective tools. Many believers are busy, but not always fruitful in the Kingdom assignment Jesus gave us. Being fruitful should be valued above being merely busy. It is possible to work hard, do excellent work, and still spend our strength on the wrong thing, missing purpose and destiny altogether.

In view of the priority Jesus gave us, many of us need to reset our compass. Our time is one of the most valuable currencies we possess. How we spend our time shapes our destiny; in many ways, we become the result of the time we have invested. Each day we are given the same currency: twenty-four hours. The key

is to use that time wisely and focus on activities that help us advance the Kingdom of God, the priority given to us by the Lord.

The Bible tells us to redeem the time, “because the days are evil” (**Ephesians 5:16**). Time is a currency by which life can be measured. In many ways, you use time to purchase life. Whatever you build, learn, develop, or become requires the investment of time. That is why people pay you for your labor: they are paying for a portion of your time, energy, attention, and skill.

Even good relationships and legitimate responsibilities must be governed by wisdom. Friends and family matter deeply, but we still must discern what God is asking of us and guard against time wasters. The book of Proverbs gives much wisdom about choosing our company and ordering our lives. Otherwise, we may end up casting our pearls before swine, spending sacred time, energy, and resources on pursuits that cannot bear Kingdom fruit, just like the prodigal son who paid a high price for worthless living.

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 have a greater calling, and because of that, we must learn to find the “off” switch: on the remote control, on wasteful habits, on empty scrolling, and on the shiny objects the world uses to lure our attention. Spending unproductive hours in media distractions can leave us intellectually and spiritually impoverished, with no real gain in wisdom, knowledge, obedience, or fruit.

You Can't Play Both Ends



“The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord” (**Matthew 10:24**). Jesus also said, “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (**John 13:15**). In this chapter, we will look more closely into the Word to understand what Jesus asks of His disciples, and what it means to be like Him. He often said, “It hath been said... but I say unto you.” He taught a new way, and when we understand His way, we can affect the world around us for the Kingdom of Heaven.

When we look at the many demands of discipleship that Jesus taught, His message seems to expose and divide everything. In the natural, His teachings can seem extremely constraining and stringent. But are they? Or was He revealing a principle, a law, and a freedom of the Kingdom through each one? Jesus was not building a prison of rules. He was showing us the path of life. Let’s look at some of them.

James warned that “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (**James 1:8**). That is why a disciple cannot live with one heart for Jesus and another heart for the world. Divided loyalty weakens obedience, clouds discernment, and leaves the believer unstable. Jesus’ commands expose the divided places in the heart so the disciple can walk free, focused, and fully surrendered.

Jesus’ commands are not religious burdens. They are Kingdom laws. They expose the things that divide the heart, cloud the mind, weaken obedience, and keep the believer tied to the world. His correction is not cruelty. His commands are not chains. They are guardrails that lead us into freedom, focus, authority, and fruitfulness.

When Jesus chose His followers, He called them to follow Him right away. “Now as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed Him” (**Mark 1:16-18**). Why? Because a decision not acted upon becomes indecision.

Jesus redefined family loyalty by teaching that no earthly relationship may take the place that belongs to Him. “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (**Matthew 10:37**). He also said, “Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother” (**Matthew 12:50**). Why? Because once we are born into the Kingdom of light,

our highest loyalty belongs to the Father. We still love and honor our natural family, but we no longer let any human relationship rule above obedience to Christ. We are born again as children of our Father in heaven, and our brothers and sisters are those of the Kingdom.

Jesus said to one man, “Follow Me.” But the man answered, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Jesus said unto him, “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God” (**Luke 9:59-60**). Why? Because the call of the Kingdom is urgent. Jesus was not teaching disrespect for family. He was exposing delay, hesitation, and divided priority. Our commission is to bring eternal life to those who are lost and dying spiritually.

Jesus also said, “No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God” (**Luke 9:62**). Why? Because if you keep looking back, you will eventually go back.

Jesus clearly stood in the spiritual precedent God had already given His people: “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” (**Exodus 20:2-3**). Why? Because the world offers many competing gods: materialism, distraction, false religion, entertainment, comfort, reputation, and self. When these things rule our affection, time, decisions, and obedience, they draw the heart away from worshiping God.

Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (**Matthew 6:24**). Money is not evil in itself, and work is honorable. But money must never become master. Why? Because money is meant to serve God’s Kingdom, not sit on the throne of the heart.

If you want to follow Jesus, you must deny yourself. “Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (**Matthew 16:24**). Why? Because it is by dying to self that we truly live. Jesus said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (**John 12:24**).

In 1 Peter 1:15-16, Peter referred to God’s command in Leviticus: “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (**1 Peter 1:15-16**). Why? Because Peter also says, “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance” (**1 Peter 1:14**). Disobedience turns the heart back toward what God delivered us from. It opens the door to compromise and dulls our sensitivity to God’s ways.

We need to learn to live humbly before God and others. Why? Pride makes us ignore God, forget God, and trust ourselves. “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts” (**Psalm 10:4**). “Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off” (**Psalm 138:6**). Pride was at the root of Satan’s rebellion, and when we yield to pride, we move away from dependence on God. The Word says, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (**James 4:6**).

We live and work together as one body, with Jesus as the Head. Why? Because we are called to “grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body fitly joined together... maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (**Ephesians 4:15-16**). You cannot live isolated discipleship and still fulfill God’s plan for His body, His Bride.

If you are truly living in obedience to the Word and being a doer of the Word, persecution is promised. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (**2 Timothy 3:12**). Why? Because the kingdom of darkness fights the Kingdom of light. “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” (**Ephesians 6:12**).

You must forgive. Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive, and Jesus answered, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (**Matthew 18:21-22**). Why? Because unforgiveness imprisons the heart. Jesus said, “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (**Matthew 6:14-15**). Unforgiveness produces bitterness, and bitterness keeps us from showing the Lord’s love. The Word warns us, “Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (**Hebrews 12:15**). And remember, Jesus died to forgive all of us.

We are warned not to judge our fellow man with a condemning, hypocritical spirit. Why? Because there may be a beam in our own eye. Jesus said, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” (**Matthew 7:3-5**). He also said, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged” (**Matthew 7:1-2**). God sees the heart. We are called to discern truth, but not to sit in God’s seat as final judge.

Jesus said, “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 5:44**). Why? Because Jesus is teaching us to be like the Father. He said, “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just

and on the unjust” (**Matthew 5:45**). This is not natural love. This is Kingdom love.

Do not hide your light. Let your light shine. Jesus said, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid” (**Matthew 5:14**). He also said, “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (**Matthew 5:15**). Why? “That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (**Matthew 5:16**).

Do not fear man. Fear God. Jesus said, “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**). Why? Because the fear of man brings a trap. “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe” (**Proverbs 29:25**). Fear of man pulls the heart away from reverencing God and trusting Him. It trains the disciple to seek human approval instead of divine approval.

Jesus also said not to be ashamed of Him or of His Words. “For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels” (**Luke 9:26**). Why? Because shame silences witness. It makes the believer hide the very truth that can set others free.

Beware of living for the approval of men, especially in a social media age where praise can become a trap. Jesus said, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you” (**Luke 6:26**). Why? Because compliments and praises can promote surface values. There is little lasting worth in the praises of man when those praises are rooted in appearance, popularity, image, and temporal accomplishment. The Word says, “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (**Galatians 6:3**). Only in obeying God will we find the kind of encouragement on which we can build our lives. “But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another” (**Galatians 6:4**). Man generally looks at outward appearance and surface achievement, but “the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (**1 Samuel 16:7**).

The Word says, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (**Romans 12:2**). Why? Because the only way to stay separate from the world after being born again and receiving the Holy Spirit is to have a renewed mind that is filled with and guided by God’s Word. Peter said, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (**1 Peter 1:13**).

Jesus revealed the true Gospel in every aspect of life: money, career, personal relationships, spiritual laws, prayer, government, ambition, and more. Why? Because He was teaching us to “seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (**Matthew 6:33**). When you stop and think about it, He was telling people to get rid of the wrong practices and wrong priorities that were destroying them. He was teaching values and principles to liberate them from the shackles that were holding them back. Jesus said, “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” (**John 8:31-32**).

His laws are not constraining and stringent. They are liberating and guiding. They are setting us free to advance the Kingdom.

Jesus was teaching the laws of the Kingdom that make it possible for people to live in freedom, no longer captives of the kingdom of darkness. He was teaching people to focus on the most important things and to remain committed to the priorities that would make their lives worth living for Him and for others.

We should not see discipline as strenuous and constraining, but as instruction, teaching, and training that is liberating and emancipating. Discipline creates room for growth and progress.

Once you take religiosity out of the Gospel, it all comes down to obedience, healthy discipline, and walking in the new identity He has given us. Once we are born again, we live in a different Kingdom and we have a different passport. Jesus preached the Kingdom of God. He advanced the Kingdom by His life, His works, His everyday example, and His teachings.

Jesus said, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (**Matthew 18:18**). He gave us authority to advance the Kingdom of Heaven on earth against the kingdom of darkness. This means that once we know the truth, we are empowered to perform the works of God. The new man comes with a new citizenship, and it also comes with responsibility. Why? Because once we know these things, we are accountable. We have been given responsibility to help set the captives free. That was Jesus’ mission: to bring the Kingdom of Light and set the captives free.

A weakness in the Christian life comes when we try to hold on to two identities, two passports for two different kingdoms. Jesus prayed for His disciples, and for us, that we would be separate from the world. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (**John 17:14-15**). While we are in the world, the challenge is to operate according to the principles of the Kingdom without flip-flopping between the two worlds. One

kingdom cancels the authority of the other in our lives. Jesus knew how important it would be for His disciples to be single-minded because of all that would be expected of them.

That is why discipleship cannot be confused with religion. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders, saying, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (**Matthew 23:13**). Religious systems have often been used as a veil to hide the Father’s heart, but Jesus exposed that blindness because He loved the people trapped beneath it. His rebuke was not cruelty. His correction was truth opening the prison door.

They say the best leaders lead by example. We must demonstrate the laws of the Kingdom, not by religious appearance, but by fruit, obedience, and results. Jesus said, “He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also” (**John 14:12**). How? By obeying His teachings and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Obedience to the Word brings understanding and clarity. Understanding is so important. Jesus said, “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath” (**Matthew 13:12**). When we do not understand, the enemy comes and steals the Word. The Bible tells us, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (**Proverbs 4:7**). It is by doing the Word that you begin to understand the Word. It is by obeying that you begin to see.

Operating according to the laws of the Kingdom should become second nature to us. Obedience to the Word must become our default position: plain, simple, and normal for a disciple.

In the Kingdom of God, we do not have to fear. Why? “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (**Hebrews 13:6**). And the Word says, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (**2 Timothy 1:7**).

We do not have to live worried about money. Why? Because when we put the Kingdom first, the Lord takes care of our needs. Jesus gave a powerful illustration of this when He told Peter, “Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee” (**Matthew 17:27**). The Father knows how to provide for Kingdom obedience.

We live the Kingdom. We walk differently, talk differently, and show the Kingdom. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called

you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus came to bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and He demonstrated it.

We have a new set of rules and laws, and they work. We can live blessed, joyful, fruitful, and full of testimony because the Kingdom is real. We have access to power, wisdom, revelation, authority, righteousness, and the Holy Spirit. We have been made righteous in Christ. Awake to your righteousness.

People must see the Kingdom in you. Let us be full of testimonies. Let us be full of the acts of the apostles. Let our lives become evidence that Jesus is alive, His Word is true, His Kingdom is here, and His disciples cannot play both ends.

So yes, Jesus’ teachings confront us. They confront delay. They confront divided loyalty. They confront love of money, fear of man, pride, unforgiveness, isolation, worldly conformity, religious blindness, and hidden faith. But remember: His correction is rescue. His commandments are not meant to crush the sincere believer. They expose the traps that keep believers powerless, distracted, and double-minded.

You cannot play both ends. You cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot follow Jesus and keep looking back. You cannot hide your light and still call yourself a witness. You cannot fear man and walk in the boldness of God. You cannot carry two passports and live with one undivided allegiance. But this is not bad news. This is freedom. Jesus is not calling us into bondage. He is calling us out of divided living and into the clear, powerful, obedient life of a true disciple.

Christianity Is Not Churchianity



If Christians are called to be disciples, then spiritual leaders must be committed to making disciples. In any city where there are churches, pastors and leaders should be finding ways to pray together, witness together, teach the Word, and focus on training believers to live as disciples. The modern church model has often trained people to attend, but Jesus commanded us to make disciples. Believers should be equipped to carry the victory of the cross into the streets, homes, workplaces, and communities around them. Christianity cannot be fully lived out in church once a week. Nothing about discipleship points to a once-a-week meeting.

When Paul corrected the Corinthians for promoting division, they were saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I am of Apollos” (**1 Corinthians 1:12**). Paul was exposing the danger of dividing the body of Christ around human names, human leaders, and human labels. There is only one Gospel, and it must be lived out. Denominational names must never become walls that divide the one body of Christ. We are one body under one Lord, one faith, and one Gospel.

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**). Why? Because unless self is denied, Christ cannot be fully expressed through us. Discipleship is the death of self-rule so that Christ may live in us and through us. This is the mystery of the Gospel that Paul declared: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (**Colossians 1:27**). He also said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (**Galatians 2:20**).

God no longer dwells in a box made by human hands. His temple and tabernacle are now His people. The victory of the cross means that Christ now lives in believers all over the world, sons and daughters carrying His life, His Spirit, His love, and His authority into the darkness. Why? Because the Winner lives inside us, and we have been called to enforce the victory of the cross on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus has paid for the full reconciliation of man to the Father. Through the victory of the cross, all who believe can become sons of God. How can news this good stay inside the four walls of a church?

The corruption that entered human nature through the fall has been dealt with through the victory Jesus won over the devil. What man lost in the garden, spiritual life, intimacy with the Father, and delegated authority under God, was redeemed through Christ. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus reconciled man to God and opened the way for a new creation life.

John wrote, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (**1 John 3:8**). Jesus has given us authority through His name and power through the Holy Spirit to stand against the works of the enemy: sickness, oppression, bondage, deception, and darkness. Jesus came to restore man to the Father and bring us back into our God-given identity: intimate relationship with God and delegated authority under Him. Man was never created to be ruled by the devil. Man was created to walk with God and carry His rule on the earth. Now this is good news.

So why would any pastor, leader, or believer keep this news hidden? And why should the body of Christ allow human labels, institutional comfort, or denominational divisions to dilute or pollute the message of the Kingdom? That makes no sense. The Gospel is too powerful to be contained, and the body of Christ is too precious to be divided by lesser things.

The victory of Jesus is the greatest victory in the history of mankind, so great that history itself is marked by His coming. His death and resurrection changed the dynamics of life itself. Sin was judged. Death was defeated. The devil was stripped of his authority. Man was invited back into fellowship with the Father. That victory is not meant to be admired from a pew. It is meant to be proclaimed, demonstrated, and carried into the world.

The victory of Jesus eliminated death. 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 is not small news. That is the announcement that death has been defeated and eternal life has been opened to every person who believes.

It is also a victory that repurposed and reoriented man’s destiny. Jesus did not come merely to forgive sin and leave man wandering without purpose. He came to restore life, meaning, joy, peace, fulfillment, and Kingdom assignment. Jesus said plainly, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it” (**Luke 9:24**). In other words, the life we try to preserve for ourselves becomes empty, but the life we surrender to Jesus becomes full.

That victory made it possible for you to defeat death now by entering eternal life through Christ, even while living on earth. It made it possible for you to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of God now, and not only later in heaven. It made it possible for you to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to bring the Kingdom of God on earth in word, deed, love, power, and witness. Now, that is powerful news.

So pastors, leaders, and believers alike, let us commit to sharing this good news with the world. We cannot say we believe it if we refuse to live it. Faith

without works is dead, meaning it has no living expression if it remains locked inside the walls of a church. Christianity is alive, vibrant, bold, and fruitful. Anything that reduces it to passive attendance, religious routine, or powerless tradition is churchianity. Jesus did not call us to be hearers only. The Word says, “But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (**James 1:22**). We are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,” called to “show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (**1 Peter 2:9**).

We are called to bear fruit. Jesus said, “I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (**John 15:16**). We are called to make the good news known. We are called to be fishers of men. Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (**Matthew 4:19**). He also said, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest” (**Matthew 9:37-38**). So this is not optional. It is a command. Jesus made it clear that His true family is made up of those who do the will of His Father.

“Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother” (**Matthew 12:50**). And James tells us plainly that if we hear the Word but refuse to do it, we deceive ourselves (**James 1:22-25**).

Christianity is a call to join the army of God, put on the whole armor of God, stand against the works of darkness, and win. The Word says, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day” (**Ephesians 6:13**). We do not fight in our own strength. We stand in Christ’s victory, clothed in His armor, filled with His Spirit, carrying His Gospel, and advancing His Kingdom.

This is why Christianity is not churchianity. Christianity cannot be reduced to a seat, a service, a label, or a routine. Christianity is Christ alive in His people. It is the victory of the cross carried into the world. It is the Kingdom of God demonstrated through surrendered disciples who obey the Word, love the lost, bear fruit, and refuse to hide the greatest news ever given to mankind.

What Does It Mean to Be a Christian Disciple?



A Christian disciple is one who learns from, follows, obeys, and lives like his Master, Jesus. Jesus said, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (**John 14:15**). He also said that not everyone who says, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the Kingdom, but “he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven” (**Matthew 7:21**).

When we walk like Jesus walked, our actions, desires, motives, and goals begin to change. They come into alignment with His Word and His will, not only for ourselves, but also for others.

A disciple is not merely someone who agrees with Jesus. A disciple is someone being trained by Jesus. He is not only informed by the Word; he is formed by the Word. His thinking changes. His habits change. His priorities change. His relationships change. His purpose changes. The life of Jesus becomes the pattern, and the Word of Jesus becomes the rule.

Christian discipleship is a full departure from living as the world lives. It is a new lifestyle. Jesus prayed, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (**John 17:15-16**). In surrendering our lives to Him, we do not escape the world; we live in it as citizens of another Kingdom, letting Christ live through us.

Our life is no longer our own. To put it bluntly, we’re DEAD. Jesus said, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself” (**Matthew 16:24**). The Christian life is not merely a small sacrifice; it is the full denial of self so that Christ may live through us. The apostle Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (**Galatians 2:20**). The life of a Christian disciple involves total commitment to following Jesus as a doer of the Word, not a hearer only. The Word says, “But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (**James 1:22**).

We are not only students of God’s Word. We are followers of the discipline of Christ, meaning we practice and live out His teachings. To be a disciple of Jesus is not merely to adhere to a set of beliefs. It is to live a new lifestyle under His Lordship.

Jesus said it clearly: “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**).

Again, he said, “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple” (**Luke 14:33**).

Take a few minutes to read and meditate on the verses below. They spell out clearly 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.

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.

Obedience Is the Key to Christianity



Jesus taught that hearing His Word alone will not transform us. It is in doing the Word and walking it out that the Word works its power in us.

James said, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (**James 2:14-17**).

This may be a hard saying for some, but there is more to Christianity than church-going. We cannot gauge our Christianity by the number of “don’ts” in our lives, but by the “do’s” of obedience to the standard of discipleship that Jesus gave us.

We are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. We are called to share His love, proclaim the good news, lay hands on the sick, cast out demons, cleanse the lepers, and carry the compassion and authority of Jesus wherever we go. Around the world, believers are still stepping out in faith, praying for the sick, ministering to the hurting, and seeing lives touched in the name of Jesus. That is Christianity in action.

If we are not doing the Word, then we are hearers only, which Jesus warned against in Matthew 7. He said, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a WISE MAN who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a FOOLISH man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell and great was its fall” (**Matthew 7:24-27**).

If we are not obeying the Word, we cannot be fulfilling our God-given destiny. The Gospel cannot 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, sharing, loving, obeying, and living as the visible expression of Christ in the world.

Paul said, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (**Romans 12:1-2**).

That is where our Christianity should begin: as a daily living sacrifice. As we surrender ourselves to God and allow our minds to be renewed by His Word, our lives become living proof of His good, acceptable, and perfect will.

Checkout these few verses below. WOW.

Makes you want to be a DOER.

John 14:21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

John 14:23 If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

John 15:14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

James 4:17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

1John 2:5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

2John 1:6a This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.

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, then something about that conversion must be examined. Discipleship does not earn salvation, but true salvation produces discipleship. Jesus does not come merely to be acknowledged. He comes to be Lord.

We try every excuse to keep ourselves from obeying Christ. Jesus exposed many of those excuses in the parable of the great supper, when those who were invited refused to come (**Luke 14:16-24**). We say, “Well, I can’t really follow Jesus because I have children now.” But should family keep us from being committed to Jesus? Rather, family should become an incentive to follow Him more faithfully. Should lack of comfort be an excuse? Should old age? If you truly know Jesus, you are not retired from obedience, you are re-fired for purpose. Where do we find retirement from discipleship in the Gospels?

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 runs all throughout the New Testament. You cannot serve two masters. You must seek first the Kingdom. No man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God.

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 deep and laid the foundation on the rock” (**Luke 6:46-48**). He’s virtually saying, “You are only a solid believer, if you obey what I say.”

Most people think that making a decision to believe in Christ is enough, but in actuality, that initial decision is only the beginning. It is like enlistment. It is the same as raising your hand and committing to turn your life around. That original decision is when you volunteer to enlist in a fight for truth, freedom, and the Kingdom of God. At that point, you become a soldier. And as a soldier, you live by a set of disciplines. When you join an army, you obey its commands. There is no army in this world that would tolerate soldiers who refuse to follow orders.

Discipleship is enlisting in the service of God’s Kingdom. Jesus’ call to follow Him means walking the same path He walked. Following Him means

learning from Him, obeying Him, and imitating 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 is not casual agreement with Christ. It is total allegiance and obedience to Christ.

Ours is an army of 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**).

Jesus also said, “Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (**John 15:14**).

He said again, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (**John 14:15**).

And again, “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love” (**John 15:10**).

The apostle John, who was so close to Jesus, kept repeating the same truth in his epistles: “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (**1 John 2:4**).

John also said, “And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (**1 John 2:3**).

And again, “And this is love, that we walk after His commandments” (**2 John 1:6**).

Even when Jesus sent out His disciples, He told them to make disciples of all nations, “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (**Matthew 28:20**). We are not called to be believers only. We are called to be disciples. We are called to follow His discipline so that we may become like Him.

I do not quite understand how we miss this message. It may come from reducing salvation to a quick prayer without explaining repentance, surrender, and the call to follow Jesus. Prayer matters, but conversion is more than repeating words. Jesus said, “Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (**Matthew 4:17**). Repentance means a change of mind, a turning around, a complete reorientation of life. It means turning from the world and seeking first the Kingdom of God. It cannot be a slight change of plans.

Even when Jesus first called His disciples, He said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (**Matthew 4:19**). He did not call them to become religious spectators. He called them into a life of following, learning, obeying,

witnessing, and making disciples. Disciples are trained to obey the commands of Jesus and live their lives in the image of Christ.

Sometimes the whole picture was not explained when we first heard the Gospel. Many people were told about the benefits, but not the responsibility and accountability. 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 have sufficient to finish it?” (**Luke 14:27-28**). He continued, “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 14:29-30**).

Only disciples are true converts. Why? Because true conversion becomes 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 has called us to do? Jesus said, “But why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (**Luke 6:46**).

Have we not found the one pearl of great price? Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant who found one pearl of great price and “went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (**Matthew 13:45-46**). Is the Kingdom not worth far above everything else?

Faith means complete reliance on God. You have to let go of the world. It cannot work while you are still clinging to the very life Jesus called you to surrender. Jesus said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” (**Luke 14:33**). So do not be afraid to pay the price. That pearl is worth so much more. That is discipleship.

Living Holy!



There was a real transformation in the spirit when we were born again. Our spirit, once dead in sin, has been made alive in Christ. The old man was crucified with Him, and our new life is now hidden with Christ in God. The Word says, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (**Colossians 3:3**).

Holiness is not how we become accepted by God. In Christ, we are already accepted. Holiness is how our mind, emotions, habits, desires, and body come into agreement with the new life God has placed within us.

However, our mind, will, emotions, and body still have to be brought into agreement with that new life. So, while our spirit is born again and empowered through Christ, our soul and body must be trained to line up with the new identity God has placed within us.

Paul said, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (**Romans 12:1**). He then said, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (**Romans 12:2**). The Bible calls this mortifying the flesh, living holy, living sanctified, and being separated unto God.

In the first part of Romans, Paul explains how we are no longer justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Christ. The old covenant system has been fulfilled in Jesus, and the old man has been crucified with Him. In Romans 6, Paul then explains how the believer must no longer yield the body to sin, but must live according to the new identity received in Christ. “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**).

“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present the members of your body to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present 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 Paul is saying is that we must bring our soul and body into alignment with the new identity of the born-again spirit. In Romans 12:1-2, he explains it

further: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (**Romans 12:1-2**).

Holiness means living transformed and separated unto God. It means submitting our soul and body to the will of God. “Acceptable unto God” means well-pleasing to God. Unfortunately, because we were born into the kingdom of darkness, our minds, emotions, and bodies learned wrong patterns and defaulted to sinful habits. Those unclean habits corrupt the mind, defile the conscience, train the body toward sin, and dull our sensitivity to the Spirit. This is where the war between the flesh and the spirit becomes very real. The Word says, “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (**Romans 8:7**).

Through the blood of Christ, we are cleansed and made new. But our minds, thoughts, bodies, and habits must be renewed and trained by the Word and the Spirit. Jesus said, “Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you” (**John 15:3**). The Holy Spirit helps, leads, convicts, and empowers us, but He does not obey for us. We must cooperate with Him. He strengthens us, but we must yield. He speaks, but we must listen. He leads, but we must follow.

Most battles in the life of a believer come from old habits in the mind and body that have not yet been brought under the rule of Christ. This is what we discussed earlier when talking about two different identities: one foot in the world and one foot in the Kingdom. It cannot work.

Romans 6:12-14 says, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

In other words, do not let any member of your body lead you into sin. Jesus went even further by using strong language to show how serious we must be about removing anything that causes us to stumble (**Matthew 5:29**). He was teaching the importance of bringing every part of our lives under the authority of our new identity in Him. That is called developing strong habits that contribute to spiritual health.

Remember, God is holy, and He calls His people to live separate from unrighteousness. That is why we must live holy, separated and devoted unto God, bringing our minds, emotions, and bodies into agreement with the discipline of a disciple.

Holiness means total devotion to God. Close to this word is the word integrity, which means being true through and through. As our minds are renewed and our bodies are disciplined, holiness develops integrity of character, and integrity leads us into greater loyalty to the Word of God.

Paul puts it clearly in Romans 8:13: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Notice that we must put to death the deeds and habits of the body through the Spirit. We must discipline the mind and the flesh, not by human strength alone, but by cooperating with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul goes on to say, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (**Romans 8:14-15**).

Let us take time to examine our character, our inner life, our habits, and the thought patterns we entertain. We must ask honestly whether they line up with the Word of God. If not, we must commit to disciplining our minds and bodies according to the discipline of a disciple. Think of it as a gym in the Spirit. Going to the gym can be a real challenge, but once you start growing stronger, you do not regret the discipline.

Surely, we understand the need to discipline our bodies to stay healthy and strong. In the same way, to live holy, we must discipline every area of our lives according to the teachings of Jesus. Jesus did not abolish the law in the sense of lowering God’s standard. To the contrary, He raised the standard by bringing obedience into the heart. For example, He taught that adultery begins with lust in the heart: “But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (**Matthew 5:28**). The Word also says, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (**1 John 3:15**).

So every thought, every habit, and every desire must be revisited to make sure they are brought into obedience to the teachings of Christ. It goes even further than that. Even our convictions must be examined. To stand for Christ, we must also clarify what we stand against. The opinions of man that contradict the Word of God can influence us more than we realize. Here are three areas of life we must investigate carefully.

Money: Materialists measure success by wealth, but that is not God’s view. We brought nothing into this world, and we will take nothing out of it. We were made for more than possessions. Jesus said, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (**Luke 12:15**).

Self-indulgence: The world says, “Whatever feels good must be good.” But pleasure can easily become a god. Comfort and fun may be appealing, but lasting joy comes when pleasure becomes a by-product of living out God’s purpose, not the center of life. Holiness does not rob us of joy. Holiness protects the kind of joy that lasts. The Word says, “He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (**Galatians 6:8**).

Politics: Politics can become a kind of religion when people place their ultimate hope in government to solve every problem, meet every need, provide every answer, and protect them from every fear. But we belong first to the Lord’s Kingdom. The Word says, “But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (**Philippians 4:19**). It also says, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (**Philippians 3:20**).

The corruption in business, the crisis in our schools, the chaos in government, the divisions in the body of Christ, the confusion in families, and the conflicts in personal lives all show what happens when people move away from God’s Word and wisdom. When we do not follow the Owner’s manual, when we fall away from God’s Word and guidance, we suffer the consequences. The Word says, “Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you” (**Deuteronomy 5:32-33**).

To counter these prevalent worldviews and stand for God’s truth, we must live holy. We must be true to the Lord, His Word, His ways, and His view first. Holiness is not religious appearance. Holiness is a life fully yielded to God, trained by the Word, empowered by the Spirit, and separated from the values of the world so we can represent Christ clearly.

First Love!



God created man for love, fellowship, worship, and intimacy with Him. The Word says, “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul” (**Deuteronomy 10:12**). God is jealous for our relationship and intimacy. Why? Because in Him are the right values for life, and He does not want our hearts to drift after other gods and idols. He said, “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God” (**Exodus 20:5**). As a good Father, He guards our attention and our hearts from going astray.

God wants a genuine relationship with His children. Jesus said, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth” (**John 4:23-24**).

In His last prayer before going to the cross, Jesus asked the Father that we would be one: one with Him, one with each other, and one with the Father. He prayed for all who would believe in Him, “that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us” (**John 17:20-21**). Jesus was not praying for cold religion. He was praying for deep union, shared love, and intimate fellowship with the Father.

Intimacy is central to our relationship with Jesus and with the Father. Real Christianity is union with Christ, not religious formality. It is an intimate relationship.

God does not want empty formalities. Jesus addressed the religious leaders of His day and said, “Ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition... This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:6, 8-9).

We can be as close to God as we want to be. We decide. James says, “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you” (**James 4:8**). The closer you are to someone, the more you know that person. Intimacy brings trust, love, surrender, and dependence. It is the desire to know without reservation. This closeness is like a marriage, where two hearts are joined in love, trust, and surrender. It is a melding of hearts and wills.

All the essential values of discipleship are built on intimacy. Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and

with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (**Matthew 22:37-40**). Therefore, discipleship is to be Christian to the core. No neutrality, but passion. Total oneness.

The more you meditate on God’s Word, the more you receive His love, and the more of His love you 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 David had for God and His Word: “My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times” (**Psalm 119:20**). He also said, “I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Thy commandments” (**Psalm 119:131**). God called David “a man after His own heart” (**1 Samuel 13:14**). You can know God more deeply and become more consumed with His love by loving His Word. Jesus must be your first love, and His Word must hold first place in your heart.

And when you are filled to overflowing, you overflow on others. The Word says, “We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (**1 John 4:19-21**).

He has made Himself so close and available to us. Isaiah says, “As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee” (**Isaiah 62:5**). The Word also says, “For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is His name” (**Isaiah 54:5**). He has made Himself our provider, peacemaker, healer, comforter, guide, Savior, King, protector, counselor, Master, servant, light, voice, strength, breath, Creator, and so much more. All of His attributes are for our benefit, and all of them reveal how near He has chosen to be.

Steadfast, Immovable and Faith- Full



“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 be attributed to an outstanding warrior, and yet the Word uses this kind of language for a disciple of Jesus.

The life of a disciple is not always an easy life. It is a life of battle, difficulty, hardship, and endurance. In a nutshell, we are at war. We live as warriors who represent the Kingdom relentlessly, disciples who can be depended upon and who remain faithful unto the end. Paul relates this life to wrestling and warring. “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” (**Ephesians 6:10-17**).

We are not fighting because Jesus failed to win. We are fighting because His victory must be stood upon, enforced, and demonstrated in a world still filled with darkness, lies, deception, and resistance. The war is not over the outcome. Christ has already triumphed. The war is over agreement: whose truth will govern our minds, our words, our choices, and our obedience?

Peter also admonishes us to stand steadfast in the faith against the attacks of the enemy. He said, “Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the 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 won the victory, if He is the Name above all names and every knee must bow to Him, why is there still a war?

We are not fighting because Jesus failed to win. We are fighting because His victory must be stood upon, enforced, and demonstrated in a world still filled with darkness, lies, deception, and resistance. The war is not over the final outcome. Christ has already triumphed. The war is over agreement: whose truth will govern our minds, our words, our choices, and our obedience?

First, we must understand that ever since the garden of Eden, mankind has been confronted by two kingdoms: the Kingdom of light, where God reigns, and the kingdom of darkness, where Satan works through deception, disobedience, and agreement with his lies.

Through the cross, Christ paid the penalty for sin and disarmed the powers of darkness. Paul explains, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (**Romans 10:4**). This means righteousness no longer comes through the works of the law, but through faith in Christ.

However, this does not mean the law has no purpose at all. Romans 10:4 says Christ is the end of the law “for righteousness.” In other words, the law is no longer the way a person obtains right standing with God. Righteousness comes through faith in Christ. But outside of Christ, man still stands guilty before the law because he has not received the righteousness that comes by faith.

Remember also that Jesus said He came to fulfill the law. He revealed the spirit of the law and raised the standard from outward performance to inward obedience. We no longer obey through legalism, hoping to earn enough points to save ourselves. We obey from the heart because grace has changed us.

Our spirit is redeemed. Satan cannot change the fact that our spirit is born again. However, he continues to attack us in many ways, especially in the mind, through fear, guilt, condemnation, confusion, worry, and accusation. He is the accuser of the brethren.

Paul explains that our war is spiritual. He says, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (**2 Corinthians 10:4-5**).

Those strongholds are often in the mind. They are arguments, prejudices, lies, and preconceived ideas that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. Paul said, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (**1 Corinthians 1:26**). Why? Because God does not like wise, strong, or influential people? No. The issue is self-trust. The more a person trusts in human wisdom, status, power, or religion, the harder it becomes for that person to depend fully on God.

Here are some of the main distractions man runs after, all of which can be connected to what John called “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (**1 John 2:16**): wealth, social position, education without dependence on God, power, and religion without relationship.

In the garden, the devil told Adam and Eve, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (**Genesis 3:5**). There is nothing wrong with wanting to reflect God’s character, because we were created in His image. But Satan’s insinuation was different. His lie was, “You will not need God. You can be independent. You can be self-dependent. You can decide good and evil for yourself.”

But instead of becoming free, man became enslaved to ego, self-effort, self-justification, and the impossible burden of trying to be good enough by his own strength. This is one of the roots of sin: self-dependence.

And there lies the war: self-dependence, which is the devil’s plan, versus God-dependence, which is grace. Grace brings us into direct relationship with God through intimacy, mercy, and dependence. The Word says, “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 can of Mine own self do nothing” (**John 5:30**). Jesus lived in total dependence on the Father. Total dependence on God leads to righteous living. We have already been made righteous in Christ, but living holy is learned through obedience, dependence, and intimacy. Jesus said, “Without Me ye can do nothing” (**John 15:5**).

So the key to winning the war in the Spirit is to stand hidden in our new identity, belonging to Christ, because He has already won the war. The enemy may attack, accuse, tempt, and pressure, but he cannot define or defeat the believer who stands in Christ. You are hidden in Christ. The Word says, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (**Colossians 3:3**).

The Wiles of the Devil



“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (**Ephesians 6:10-11**).

The devil’s wiles are not always obvious attacks. Sometimes they come as fear, delay, distraction, condemnation, old habits, self-pity, or even self-righteousness. His goal is simple: to stop the disciple from obeying Jesus, witnessing boldly, walking in freedom, and depending fully on the Lord.

What are the “wiles” of the devil? If you are born again, many of the enemy’s attacks against you will come in one of three ways.

He will try to make it difficult for you to be a bold, active, witnessing Christian.

He will try to pull you back into your old life.

He will try to make you self-righteous about what you are doing, so he can rob you of your dependence on the Lord.

In this chapter, we will look at the first line of attack.

One of his most frequent attacks is fear. It can be the fear of man, where we do not speak up when we know something is wrong. The Word says, “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe” (**Proverbs 29:25**). When fear trains us to stay silent, the enemy gains ground and will try to use that same weakness again. But God has not given us a spirit of fear. He has given us “power, and love, and a sound mind” (**2 Timothy 1:7**).

Fear of failure is also a major attack. The enemy 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 use anything to keep you from doing God’s command.

The enemy can also exploit physical weakness, pain, tiredness, or discomfort to make you lose focus and delay obedience. For example, if you planned to go out and pray for people, discouragement may come through a headache, fatigue, or some other physical pressure. The point is not to claim that every physical symptom is directly from the devil, but to recognize that the enemy will use anything he can to stop obedience. If we always yield to the same pattern, that weakness can become a repeated doorway of delay.

One more distraction of the devil is being entangled in the affairs of this life. Paul told 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**). Every time you have an opportunity to shine, the enemy may remind you of something “important” you need to do. There will always be distractions, but commitment and obedience set priorities. Not everything that demands your attention deserves your obedience.

Another trick of the devil is condemnation over the past. He will try to remind you of who you were so you will be afraid to testify about who Jesus has made you. But your past is not your prison anymore. Your past has become a testimony. The Word says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (**Romans 8:1**). We should not be afraid or condemned about our past. It is past, and we do not go back to it except to stand against it and tell others how to be free.

“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 and family will see is by the grace of God through salvation. The Word says, “For by grace are ye 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 hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (**Ephesians 2:8, 10**). We are not changed by self-effort. We are changed by grace, and that grace produces a new life that others can see.

One of the greatest signs of our freedom is that we begin to hate the shackles of our previous life. Jesus made this clear when He said, “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth 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 must become greater than our attachment to the affairs of this life. We hate the distractions, bondages, and empty values of the old life because they kept us from God’s will.

Being saved is not reducible to a little prayer. Prayer matters, but conversion is more than repeating words. The Gospels speak of people being set free, delivered, changed, and called to follow Jesus. That is what water baptism is meant to represent. You go down as the old man, and you rise as a born-again, changed, delivered disciple of Christ.

We can call ourselves Christians if we want to; the devil is not threatened by a label. What threatens the kingdom of darkness is a believer who has truly been changed, one who obeys the commandments of Jesus and walks in the freedom Christ purchased. Jesus said, “For whosoever 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 also said, “And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which 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 determined decision to walk into the new life. Jesus said, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (**John 8:36**).

A major attack and tactic of the devil is to get you either to return to the world or to live a life of compromise.

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**). James also warned believers not to be double-minded. “For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed... A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (**James 1:6-8**).

John talks about the lures of the world and says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of 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 hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (**James 1:14-15**). Sin is no small thing. Sin leads to death. It leads to destruction. The sin of Cain, which began as anger against Abel, eventually led to murder.

Many churches today have become too soft on sin. They call it a “problem,” when the Word calls it sin. People may say, “I have a problem with pornography,” or “I have a problem with anger,” or “I have a problem with jealousy,” or “I have a problem with drinking.” But these are not just little problems. They are spiritual battles that must be confronted with truth, repentance, discipline, and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Word says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (**1 Peter 5:8**). The enemy’s purpose is to destroy, weaken, distract, and take people out. That is why the life of a disciple is called warfare, and it must not be taken lightly.

The Word says, “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” (**Ephesians 6:12**). This is a spiritual war. The enemy is out to render you useless spiritually. Jesus calls us to be separate from the world. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (**2 Corinthians 6:17**).

You do not want the world to have ownership over your heart. The Word says, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (**1 John 5:19**). The world draws people into many appealing distractions: sports, politics, fashion, comfort, entertainment, and the list goes on. John is very clear about staying free from the pull of the world: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (**1 John 2:15**).

If you want to be dedicated, live fully for God, and abide in His protection and blessing, you need to draw a clear line between the world and your commitment to God. The Word says, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this... to keep himself unspotted from the world” (**James 1:27**).

God has given us authority to stand against the works of the devil, even in our own lives. In the garden, man yielded dominion to the devil through disobedience, but at the cross Jesus defeated the enemy and restored authority to those who belong to Him. 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 this inheritance, in bringing the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. And we cannot do that with one foot in the world and one foot in the Kingdom of God. The Word says, “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**).

But you may say, “How can I fight against the pulls of the world and my own weaknesses?” The answer is clear: you cannot win by remaining passive and undecided. The Word says, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (**James 4:7**). Resisting the devil is not passive. It means refusing his lies, rejecting his fear, resisting his condemnation, and moving forward in obedience anyway. We attack darkness by obeying the light.

Make a concerted move against the pulls of the world and the weaknesses in your life. Focus until you win. Do not merely try faith. Commit to victory. Stand on the Word. Speak the Word. Obey the Word. Resist the enemy until he flees.

We are not to turn our backs on the enemy in fear. Jesus said, “I give unto you power... over all the power of the enemy” (**Luke 10:19**). We face the enemy with the authority of Christ. We rebuke lies. We cast out fear. We confront our

weaknesses and sins with God's Word, repentance, discipline, and faith. And we fight until we win.

Faith is not passive. Faith is active, bold, and obedient. Faith speaks of the victories ahead as already settled because God's Word is true. It is knowing that victory belongs to Christ, therefore we stand until we see it manifested. The Word says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (**1 John 5:4**).

When we are focused, the mind becomes powerful and productive. That is why we must be single-minded and not double-minded. The Word says, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (**Romans 12:2**).

The Word also says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?... And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (**2 Corinthians 6:14-17**).

This is the call of a disciple. We do not belong to the world anymore. We belong to Christ. We do not fight people, but we do resist darkness. We do not live in fear, compromise, condemnation, or passivity. We stand in Christ, we resist the devil, we obey the Word, and we walk in the freedom Jesus purchased for us.

How to Be More Than Conquerors



The authority of Christ has been given to every believer. Jesus said, “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (**Luke 10:19**).

So the most important thing for us is to appropriate and walk in the power, authority, and dominion that have been given to us in our new identity and inheritance. The Word says, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (**1 John 5:4**). There is no limitation on “whatsoever is born of God.” Every born-again believer has access to this victory. And Paul says, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (**Romans 8:37**). We are not more than conquerors because we are strong in ourselves. We are more than conquerors through Christ.

Most Christians do not really believe that they have authority. I know I did not truly believe it for many years. I read Mark 16:15, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” as the Great Commission that we must believe and obey, and I did. I witnessed plenty. But for a long time, I gave no real attention to the verses connected to that same commission, where Jesus said, “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” (**Mark 16:17-18**).

Jesus gave us authority to enforce the victory of the Kingdom of God on earth. He said, “And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (**Matthew 16:19**). This authority belongs to every believer in Christ, because Jesus has given His people His name, His Spirit, His Word, and His victory.

It is not only an ability.

It is also a responsibility.

In other words, because Jesus lives in us by His

Spirit, we can continue the works He commanded His followers to do. Jesus said, “He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also” (**John 14:12**). And it works. The Word says, “And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name” (**Luke**

10:17). It worked then, and it works now. But faith only works if we work it. The Word says, “Faith without works is dead” (**James 2:20**). Faith must be practiced.

The way to be more than a conqueror is to exercise and make use of the weapons of warfare that God has given us. The main weapon, of course, is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says, “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.”

Jesus won the war. The Word says, “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 have been given the authority to act in His name. It may be hard to believe, but that is precisely the key: when we believe it and exercise it, we begin to see victories.

John said, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (**1 John 3:8**). Jesus did this throughout His life by healing the sick, casting out demons, setting people free, and revealing the Father. But He also destroyed the enemy’s claim over man by paying the full price for our redemption through the cross. The enemy is defeated. The Word says, “Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (**1 John 5:5**).

The new covenant made it possible for Christ to live in you. But the devil will try to pester you with lies, doubts, and fears to keep you from letting Christ live through you. Jesus said, “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**).

So the key is to believe and exercise that victory. We have Jesus abiding in us. The Word says, “The Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one” (**1 John 2:14**). It also says, “This is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith” (**1 John 5:4**). Through the victory of the cross, Jesus has empowered His people to operate with His authority on earth. So instead of the victory being seen only in the earthly ministry of Jesus, now millions of believers carry His Spirit, His name, His authority, and His victory into the world.

But we must be fully mindful of the power given to us through God’s Word. The Word says, “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**).

So when we are under attack, we do not collapse. The Word says, “When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against

him” (**Isaiah 59:19**). That is when we raise the standard of God’s Word. That is when we stand in the authority of Christ, enforce the Kingdom of God, and resist the works of the devil.

We have already been brought into victory. The Word says, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love” (**Colossians 1:13**). We are not trying to escape darkness someday. We have already been delivered from its dominion in Christ.

We do not have to lose when we stand in the victory He has already won. The Word says, “Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (**Ephesians 6:16**). This is powerful when we fully understand it. It is our faith in God’s Word, and our use of the Word against the enemy, that quenches the fiery darts. Nothing is impossible if we believe.

We are more than conquerors through exercised faith that overcomes the world. Paul said, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (**Romans 8:37**). Notice, we are not more than conquerors because we are strong in ourselves. We are more than conquerors through Him. The victory is in Christ, and faith is how we stand in what He has already won.

A Disciple Makes Disciples



Imagine standing before the Lord, 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 consider the price Jesus paid for our salvation, His suffering, His death on the cross, and His complete victory over sin, death, and the powers of darkness, how can we keep this transforming message to ourselves? Paul declared, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (**Romans 1:16**).

The Gospel is not weak news. It is not religious information. It is the power of God unto salvation. It is the announcement that Jesus has come, that sin has been judged, that death has been defeated, that captives can be set free, and that man can be reconciled to the Father. If this news reached us and changed us, then it was never meant to stop with us.

The mandate to share God’s love is not optional. It is fundamental to our faith. John wrote, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him... Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (**1 John 4:9-11**). Love received from God must become love released toward others. If God’s love has truly touched us, then that love must move through us.

Consider what could happen if every believer truly embraced his role in God’s mission. If each of us seriously committed to sharing His love and His teachings with others, we could witness a spiritual awakening unlike anything we have seen. Jesus promised, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me... unto the uttermost part of the earth” (**Acts 1:8**). The Holy Spirit was not given only so we could feel comforted. He was given so we could become witnesses.

The urgency of this mission becomes clear when we look at the world around us. Billions still have little or no access to the Gospel, many communities still need Scripture in a language they can understand, and countless souls remain without a clear witness of Jesus Christ. These are not just numbers. They represent people Christ died to save. Jesus said, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest” (**Matthew 9:37-38**).

Notice what Jesus said. He did not say the harvest was small. He said the harvest was plenteous. The problem was not the lack of need. The problem was the lack of laborers. That means the body of Christ must stop seeing discipleship as something reserved only for pastors, evangelists, or specially gifted people. Every disciple is called to carry the life of Christ, speak the truth of Christ, and help others follow Christ.

Evangelism and discipleship are not enemies. They work together. Evangelism announces the good news and calls people to Christ. Discipleship trains those who respond to follow Christ, obey His Word, live His life, and teach others to do the same. If evangelism is birth, discipleship is growth, training, and multiplication.

Disciple-making is all throughout the New Testament. Jesus commanded us, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (**Matthew 28:19-20**). That means discipleship is not merely getting people to make a decision. It is teaching, training, forming, and helping them obey Jesus.

Jesus did not tell us only to gather crowds. He told us to make disciples. He did not tell us only to get people to pray a prayer. He told us to teach them to observe all things He commanded. A disciple receives the Word, lives the Word, obeys the Word, and then helps someone else do the same.

Jesus explained the whole concept of Christianity in John 15 when He said, “I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing” (**John 15:5**). Disciple-making flows from abiding. We do not reproduce life by human pressure. We bear fruit because we remain connected to Jesus.

Disciple-making is more than helping immature believers mature. It is training people to live the life of Christ, obey the Word of Christ, and reproduce the teachings of Christ in others. It is fruit-bearing that creates more fruit-bearing. It is multiplication. It is one life in Christ helping another life become rooted, fruitful, and obedient.

Just as Jesus came preaching the Gospel, saying, “Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (**Matthew 4:17**), He also called men to follow Him. “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (**Matthew 4:19**). He did not call them into passive belief. He called them into a life of following, learning, obeying, witnessing, and multiplying.

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew, they left their nets and followed Him. When He called James and John, they left the ship and their father and followed Him (**Matthew 4:18-22**). Why? Because discipleship requires a change of

loyalty, a change of direction, and a change of purpose. Jesus did not merely give them a new belief system. He gave them a new life and a new mission.

And how do His disciples make disciples? With the Word. The Word teaches. The Word corrects. The Word trains. The Word renews the mind. The Word reveals Jesus. The Word forms the heart of a disciple. We are not making disciples by personality, pressure, entertainment, or religious performance. We make disciples by bringing people to Jesus and teaching them to obey His Word.

When Paul trained Timothy, he said, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (**2 Timothy 2:2**). Timothy was to pass the same message to faithful people who would be able to teach others also. This is not only evangelism. These were faithful people, already believers, being trained to carry the message further.

In essence, Paul was putting four generations of discipleship in motion: from Paul, to Timothy, to faithful teachers, to others. Passing on the faith is a multi-generational process. Christian discipleship has the long view in mind: reaching others who will reach still others.

That is why the Gospel must not stop with us. If it stopped with us, something went wrong. The river of God was meant to flow. The light was meant to shine. The seed was meant to produce fruit. The disciple was meant to make disciples.

Will you pass it on? Will you tell someone today? You do not need to wait for a large platform, a perfect program, or a church-wide initiative. Start with one person. Then two. Then a small group. Open the Word. Teach what Jesus taught. Pray together. Practice obedience together. Train others to train others. That is discipleship.

A disciple makes disciples because love cannot stay silent. A disciple makes disciples because obedience cannot remain private. A disciple makes disciples because the Gospel is too powerful, too costly, and too life-changing to end with one person.

So do not let the Gospel stop with you. Let the love of God move through you. Let the Word of God be taught by you. Let the life of Jesus be seen in you. Let the mission continue through you. The harvest is still great, the laborers are still few, and Jesus is still calling disciples who will make disciples.

Let's Be Fighters



You have to have conviction, or you cannot live as a true disciple. When you serve the Lord, you must be convinced of the truth of His Word and willing to stand as a witness to that truth. You must be willing to fight for what you believe, not by arguing with people, but by standing firm, obeying the Word, resisting compromise, and refusing to bow to fear. Faith is not passive.

This fight is not against people. We do not fight with anger, pride, violence, or argument. We fight by standing in truth, obeying the Word, resisting compromise, rejecting lies, and refusing to bow to fear. The disciple's fight is spiritual, and the weapons are spiritual.

The devil will do everything he can to tempt you to forsake God's way. If he cannot get you to stop trusting God completely, he will try to get you to compromise little by little until you become so weak that you no longer stand for anything.

He usually tempts you with half-truths that make you doubt your convictions and fail to live up to them. Most people do not realize that one small act of disobedience can lead to another, one small refusal can lead to another, and one bit of selfishness can lead to more.

You may think, "Oh, just this one little sin. It is no big deal, and no one will know." But that little crack in your armor can become the place where the enemy begins to work. He uses that opening to poison the mind with deception, and before long, if you do not repent and resist, you can find yourself completely off track.

If you do not truly repent and stop, you can eventually drift far away from the Lord. Do not let that happen to you. Be faithful to the Lord. Be faithful to His work and to the ministry He has entrusted to you. Be loyal. The Word says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (**James 4:7**). It also says, "Neither give place to the devil" (**Ephesians 4:27**).

God delights in wholehearted, stout-hearted men and women. You have to know what you believe, Whom you serve, and where you stand, no matter what anybody else says. The Word says, "He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue" (**Proverbs 28:23**).

Take a stand like Martin Luther did when he stood before the Diet of Worms and refused to deny the truth of salvation by grace through faith. The famous line attributed to him says, "Here I stand, I can do no other." Whether facing

pressure, opposition, or danger, Luther's stand reminds us that conviction must become courage.

You cannot stop a man of faith. You cannot dissuade him. You cannot divert him. He will go on with or without you. Why? Because he has found the truth and is determined to walk by faith in that truth. He is of one mind, one heart, one spirit, and one purpose. He will not quit until he has obeyed God.

God, help us to be fighters, willing to do anything for the Lord out of simple gratitude for the salvation He has given us. We must do what we know is right, stand for what we know is true, and be willing to live faithfully for the truth, no matter the cost.

"If Anyone Will Come After Me...."



Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (**Matthew 16:24**).

Taking up the cross is not self-hatred. It is not religious misery. It is the daily decision to deny self-rule so that Christ may rule. It is surrendering the old life, the old desires, the old priorities, and the old identity so that the life of Jesus can be seen in us.

The main reason we must address genuine discipleship is that Christians are moving toward tougher times. This is not a reason to fear. It is a reason to become rooted, trained, surrendered, and ready.

It is amazing to understand who Jesus truly is and to see the whole plan of God to redeem mankind from the bondage and confusion of this world. The truth of God’s Word is an awesome, eye-opening, truth-filled revelation. David said, “I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil” (**Psalms 119:162**). The Word also says, “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (**Psalms 19:8**).

Receiving and following Jesus is so powerful because it brings us back into the original purpose for which we were created.

Some people ask, “Why can’t I just be a Christian without having to be a disciple, and a disciplined, active, bold one at that?” The answer is simple: a Christian is called to be a disciple. Jesus said, “And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me” (**Matthew 10:38**).

All that Jesus is calling us to surrender are the sins, deviations, bondages, and destructive habits we learned in the world. He is not calling us out of life. He is calling us out of death and into true life. The Word says, “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (**Titus 3:3**).

All of those sins, deviations, and destructive habits kept us in shackles and weakened our destiny, purpose, and effectiveness. Jesus is not calling us to lose true life. He is calling us to lose the old life that was already destroying us.

Jesus said, “Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” (**Mark 8:34-35**). In other words, if we try to preserve the old worldly life, with its habits, addictions, pride, and self-rule, we will lose what really matters. But if we surrender that old life for Jesus and the Gospel, we find the life we were created to live.

What makes us followers of Christ is 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 of being a disciple. Then we must obey the teachings of Jesus in order to become active disciples. Jesus said, “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (**John 13:15**).

Unless a Christian is willing to obey the teachings of Jesus closely, can he honestly be viewed as a disciple of Jesus? There has to be more commitment. 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**).

We cannot be shy about calling things what they are. There are basic principles and disciplines in following Christ that are essential to keep us separated from the world and free from its bondage. The Word says, “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (**1 John 4:4-6**).

So the call of Jesus is not a slight adjustment to our plans. It is a full surrender of the old life and a full commitment to follow Him. If anyone will come after Him, that person must deny self-rule, take up the cross, and follow. That is not bondage. That is freedom. That is discipleship.

With Persecution...



Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12)

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12)

I read a story about a Christian pastor who witnessed his faith in Jesus to a lumberjack named Jake. Jake had come into town for a few days from the forests of northern Canada, and he received Jesus. The pastor told him, “Now that you have made Jesus your Lord, your life is going to change.” Jake asked, “How is that?” The pastor answered, “The Word says, ‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new’” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Then the pastor said, “I want to warn you, Jake. When you go back to that lumber camp, it may be difficult.” Jake asked, “Why is that, pastor?” The pastor answered, “Because many of those men are rough men with no interest in God. You will no longer be the same as you were before. You will not talk the same, live the same, curse the same, or follow the same old habits. You are going to be different, and when people notice the difference, some may mock you or persecute you.”

So Jake went back to the camp, and a few months passed before he returned to town for his next leave. He wondered if he would run into the pastor again, and sure enough, there he was, standing on a street corner passing out tracts. “Hey, pastor! Nice to see you!” Jake said. “Hi, Jake!” the pastor answered, glad to see the converted lumberjack again. “Tell me, how did it go at the lumber camp?”

“Oh, fine, just fine!” Jake answered.

The pastor said, “I told you it was going to be difficult to live a Christian life there, didn’t I?”

“No, no,” replied Jake, “it wasn’t hard at all!”

“You mean they didn’t persecute you or make it tough for you?” the pastor asked, surprised.

Jake replied, “Oh, no! You see, they never even found out that I was a Christian!”

That kind of example is not active discipleship. If you truly believe something, you talk about it. If you believe in your football team, you talk about them. If you believe in your political party, you talk about it. If you like your work, you talk about it. And if you really believe in and love Jesus, you will talk about Him and share His love with others.

There is an old story about a washerwoman who was made fun of one day by someone who said they had seen her talking about Jesus to a wooden statue in front of a cigar store. She perked up and replied, “Maybe I did! My eyesight is not so good anymore. But talking to a wooden statue about Jesus is not as bad as being a wooden Christian and never talking about Jesus to anyone!”

When Christian faith is not active and strengthened by an ongoing personal relationship with Jesus, then, like in the parable of the sower, faith does not last long. Jesus said, “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**). Facing persecution is very difficult when the roots are shallow.

When we genuinely love and serve the Lord, we will be challenged by others about our faith. That is a promise. The Word says, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (**2 Timothy 3:12**).

It would be a lie to say that taking a stand is easy. It is not. But once we have made the decision to deny ourselves, it is not about us anymore. Jesus said, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (**Matthew 16:24**).

We also know that those who refuse to take up their cross and follow Christ are “not worthy” of Him and cannot be His disciples (**Matthew 10:38; Luke 14:27**). We believe the warning that says, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (**2 Timothy 3:12**). And we understand the wisdom of Proverbs: “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” (**Proverbs 24:10**).

We are too weak to do this in our own strength. But Jesus assures us, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (**2 Corinthians 12:9**).

Jesus said, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (**Matthew 5:14-15**). They do not sit alone in some corner hoping nobody will find out that they belong to Jesus. They put the light on a stand so it gives light to the whole house.

Christians should stand up and tell others why such a miraculous change has happened in their lives. Once you are saved, it should become impossible to hide the love of God and the truth of Jesus. If you have given your life to Him, He wants you to show it and share it with others. It is the least we can do for Him Who gave His life for us. Let us shine His light.

The Resoluteness of a Disciple



This One Thing I Do

Discipleship is a commitment. It is the discipline of firmly adhering to the teachings of Jesus. Having seen the light of the Word, having enjoyed the peace that God gives, and having tasted the joy of our salvation, it becomes obvious that there is only one direction to walk. Discipleship is a definite decision. There is no more wavering, wondering, or wandering.

We become fixed in our purpose and adamant about spreading the light of God's love and His Word, so others can also be enlightened. The bottom line is that discipleship is a total commitment to love: living for love, walking in love, giving love, and helping others come into the love of the God Who is love.

Resoluteness is not stubbornness. It is not pride. It is a heart so convinced by the truth of Christ that it refuses to drift back into confusion. A resolute disciple is not fixed on his own opinion. He is fixed on Jesus, fixed on the Word, and fixed on the calling of God.

Resoluteness means the decision has already been made. We do not wake up every day asking whether we will follow Jesus. That question has already been settled. We wake up asking how we will obey Him today. A disciple is not pulled in ten directions. His heart has one direction: Christ.

The apostle Paul was a powerful example of one who stood by this firm commitment. He said, "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 3:13-14**).

The Word also says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith" (**Hebrews 12:1-2**). This is the posture of a resolute disciple. He lays aside what slows him down. He lets go of what pulls him back. He runs the race with his eyes fixed on Jesus.

Paul also told the Ephesians, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind... that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (**Ephesians 4:17-24**).

That is resoluteness. It is not merely feeling inspired for a moment. It is putting off the old life and putting on the new man. It is refusing to walk according to the vanity of the old mind. It is allowing the Word and the Spirit to renew the way we think, choose, speak, live, and obey.

James also stated it clearly when he said, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (**James 1:8**). A disciple cannot live with two minds, two loyalties, and two directions. Double-mindedness makes a person unstable because one part of the heart wants Christ, while another part still wants the world.

Jesus explained the same truth when He said, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (**Matthew 6:24**). The issue is not only money. The issue is mastery. Whatever rules the heart becomes the master. A resolute disciple has already decided that Jesus alone is Lord.

Even King David’s heart was fixed. He said, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord” (**Psalms 27:4**). David had many responsibilities, battles, pressures, and failures, but there was still one deep cry in his heart: to dwell with the Lord and behold His beauty.

Peter also admonished us by saying, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (**2 Peter 1:10**). That means we do not treat our calling casually. We give diligence. We strengthen what God has placed in us. We keep choosing the direction of Christ until our walk becomes steady, fruitful, and sure.

A resolute disciple is not perfect, but he is decided. He may be corrected, trained, stretched, and tested, but he is not for sale. He does not keep negotiating with the old life. He does not keep asking how close he can stay to the world and still belong to Jesus. His heart has settled the matter.

The Commandments of Jesus

Disciplines of a Disciple

Daily Reading and Studying God’s Word

The psalmist David blessed us with the Psalms, and throughout them we see proof that he spent 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 bringeth forth His fruit in His season; His leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (**Psalms 1:2-3**).

We read the Bible to fellowship with the Lord, and we study it so we can apply His Word to our lives. A disciple does not live by feelings alone. A disciple is trained by the Word, corrected by the Word, strengthened by the Word, and guided by the Word.

Denying Yourself

This denial of all, including ourselves, is the deepest discipline of discipleship. We have committed ourselves to put Jesus first before every earthly pleasure. It becomes Jesus first, Jesus above all, and Jesus as Lord of everything.

Jesus tells us to count the cost (**Luke 14:28-33**), concluding, “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” (**Luke 14:33**). This is not religious misery. This is freedom from everything that tries to rule the heart in place of Christ.

Fellowship With Other Believers

The Word says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (**Hebrews 10:25**).

We are all parts of one body. There are many “one another” commands in the New Testament that we cannot obey if we isolate ourselves from the body of believers. You become affected by those you fellowship with. The Word warns us, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (**1 Corinthians 15:33**). Fellowship matters because discipleship is not meant to be lived alone.

Daily Prayer and Communion With God

Jesus said, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father Which is in secret; and thy Father Which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (**Matthew 6:6**).

Prayer is an important part of communicating with the Father. It is not merely asking for things. It is fellowship, surrender, listening, worship, dependence, and intimacy. A disciple must learn to talk to God and walk with God daily.

Regularly Worshiping Together

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, that He loves us, and that He has always blessed His people.

The Word says, “And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised

the Lord” (**Ezra 3:11**). Worship strengthens our hearts, unites the body, and reminds us Who our source is.

Honoring God With Your Finances First

From the beginning, God taught His people to honor Him with the first and best. We also read that Abram gave tithes to Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God (**Genesis 14:18-20**). Tithing and giving are ways of showing God that He is the One Who gives us everything we have.

The Word says, “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase” (**Proverbs 3:9**). A disciple does not let money rule his heart. He uses what God has placed in his hands to honor God and advance His purposes.

We Are Called to Service

Jesus made it very simple. As we love Him first, our love for others and our desire to bring them to Him should come naturally. The Word says, “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (**2 Corinthians 5:14**).

Serving the Lord means shining our light. Jesus said, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth 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**).

Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations. He also said, “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples” (**John 15:8**). And He said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (**Mark 16:15**). Service is not optional for a disciple. It is the overflow of love.

A Forgiving Heart

The Word teaches us to always maintain a forgiving heart. Paul wrote, “To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also... lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (**2 Corinthians 2:10-11**). Satan uses offense, blame, bitterness, and unforgiveness to enslave people.

The Word warns us, “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**). The only way to fight against the enemy in this area of unforgiveness, offense, blame, and bitterness is with a clear heart, washed by the Word of God.

The Word says, “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. He

said, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye 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**). He also said, “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple” (**Luke 14:27**).

What does it mean to take up your cross? Taking up the cross is not self-hatred. It is not religious misery. It is the daily decision to deny self-rule so that Christ may rule. It is surrendering the old life, the old desires, the old priorities, and the old identity so that the life of Jesus can be seen in us.

Here are a few guidelines given by Jesus for us to understand what cross-bearing means.

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 10:24-25**). Jesus also said, “For I have given you an example, that ye 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 ye, except ye abide in Me” (**John 15:4**).

To serve in love and gratitude: “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**).

To love Jesus above all else: “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it” (**Matthew 10:37-39**).

To win souls for Jesus: “And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (**Matthew 4:19**).

To train more disciples: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (**Matthew 28:19-20**).

To abandon other pursuits in order to follow Jesus: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (**Matthew 13:44**).

To forsake 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 becometh unfruitful” (**Mark 4:19**).

Jesus also said, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (**John 6:27**).

To be single-minded and not look back: “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**).

Be On Guard

For as long as we live in this world, the prince of this world will continue to attack and distract us from accomplishing what God has purposed for us. The Word says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (**1 Peter 5:8**). This is why we must constantly be aware of the devices of the devil and stay on guard, as a warrior should be.

Jesus said, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (**Matthew 26:41**).

It takes consistent discipline to guard our mind, emotions, and actions against the tricks and devices of Satan. That is what resisting the enemy and being sober and vigilant is about.

The Word says, “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober... But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (**1 Thessalonians 5:5-8**).

And the best tool to resist the enemy with is the Word of God. We are fully armed. We have armor so we can stand. The Word says, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... For we wrestle not against flesh and blood... Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness... Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye 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” (**Ephesians 6:10-17**).

That is how Jesus resisted Satan in the wilderness. He resisted every temptation with, “It is written” (**Luke 4:1-13**). Let us remember that God has given us the incorruptible seed of His Word as a means to stand against

temptation and every battle of the enemy. The Word says we are born again “by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (**1 Peter 1:23**).

Jesus used the Word, so why shouldn't we? Paul says, “Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (**Ephesians 6:17**).

Train in its use. Take it into the battle with you. Advance against the enemy with the truth of God's Word. The Word says, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (**1 Peter 4:12-13**).

The Word also says, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (**1 Corinthians 10:13**). God always provides a way of escape. We must learn to recognize that way, take it, and stand in obedience.

The Word says, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith” (**Hebrews 12:1-2**). And Paul told Timothy, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (**2 Timothy 2:3**).

This is the resoluteness of a disciple. We guard our hearts. We discipline our minds. We train in the Word. We resist the enemy. We run the race. We endure hardship. We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

This one thing I do. That is the language of a disciple. Not ten directions. Not divided loyalties. Not wavering between Christ and the world. One direction. One Lord. One calling. One purpose. One life surrendered to Jesus.

Denying the Power Thereof



Christianity, if not lived out, has little or no visible power. It becomes a collection of good principles that do not transform much in anyone's life. That sounds like a bold and blunt statement, but I did not come up with it. Jesus did.

Jesus, in plain effect, said, "My teachings will not produce fruit in your life unless you do them." He said, "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**).

Hearing the Word gives us knowledge, but doing the Word releases transformation. Jesus did not say the wise man was the one who admired His teachings, memorized His teachings, or discussed His teachings. He said the wise man was the one who heard His sayings and did them. That is where the power shows up.

We must desire to see God's power in our lives through obedience. It is when we do the Word of God that the power of the Word becomes visible in our lives. James was very clear about this. He said, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (**James 2:17**). Faith without corresponding action, obedience, and visible fruit is dead.

Doing the Word does not earn salvation, but it proves that faith is alive. We are saved by grace through faith, but living faith produces obedience. The Word says, "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (**James 1:22**). A disciple does not merely hear truth. A disciple obeys truth.

We must desire discipleship, otherwise there is no evidence. And discipleship starts at home and with those closest to us. We have to pour God's Word into the people nearest to us and demonstrate God's power through a changed life, a surrendered heart, and obedient action.

All believers are the body of Christ. But can we define "believer" please? Jesus gives a very sharp definition in Matthew 7:24-27. He shows us that doing the Word proves the reality of what we believe. A believer is not merely

someone who agrees with Jesus in theory. A believer is someone who trusts Him enough to obey Him.

Paul told Timothy to stay away from religion that has no power. He said, “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (**2 Timothy 3:5**). If a religion has only the form but denies the power, then it is not the Christianity Jesus taught.

Christianity does have a definition, and it cannot be only a show of goodness. It must produce fruit. Jesus said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (**Matthew 23:27-28**).

The evidence of Christianity is a changed life. The power of God is shown through the Holy Spirit and results in the transformation of our lives. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer. The Word says, “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost Which is in you, Which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (**1 Corinthians 6:19**).

The Holy Spirit also enables the believer to bear fruit. The Word says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (**Galatians 5:22-23**). These are the attributes of a true Christian. They are not religious decorations. They are evidence that the life of Christ is working in us.

If a person says they are a Christian, there must be evidence in their life by the fruit of the Spirit, not only Christian motions. God told Isaiah,

“For as much as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men” (**Isaiah 29:13**).

God has always insisted on obedience. Look at what He told Ezekiel: “Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the Word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them 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**).

That is a frightening picture of powerless religion. They liked the sound of the Word, but they did not surrender to the authority of the Word. They enjoyed the message, but they refused the obedience. They were hearers, but not doers. And when people only hear the Word without obeying it, the Word becomes entertainment instead of transformation.

Paul also hit hard against a message that feeds the belly but goes no further. We cannot reduce the Gospel to an advertisement for comfort, gain, and the American Dream, saying, “Come to Jesus and you will be blessed,” while ignoring the cross, obedience, holiness, sacrifice, and service.

Paul said, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such 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**).

The message of the Gospel is sacrificial living. It is denying ourselves so we may bless others with truth and freedom. Prosperity and gain may have a place, but only as instruments for serving God and furthering the Kingdom. They must never become the goal of Christianity. Paul said, “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (**1 Timothy 6:5**).

Brothers and sisters, let us not be ashamed to be doers of the Word. Let us not settle for a form of godliness while denying the power thereof. Let us not build a religious life on sand and call it Christianity. Jesus called us to hear His Word and do it. He called us to bear fruit. He called us to live changed. He called us to demonstrate the power of His truth through obedience.

The power is not in religious appearance. The power is in a surrendered life. The power is in the Holy Spirit changing us from the inside out. The power is in faith that obeys, love that acts, truth that transforms, and disciples who actually do what Jesus said.

Disciple-Making Is Coaching With the Word



When you are a disciple-maker, everything you share with people should carry a Word-centered perspective. Disciple-making is not merely giving people advice. It is coaching them with the Word of God. It is helping them see life, decisions, work, relationships, family, money, service, and character through the light of God's truth.

I do not witness to unbelievers all day long in a formal way. In fact, I work with Christians and non-Christians in my businesses. But I try to bring out the Word and spiritual lessons when teaching, correcting, training, or explaining how to do things. One of my businesses deals with customers face to face, so I teach my employees to work with honesty, excellence, kindness, respect, and integrity. These are biblical values, and they should be reflected in all of our dealings.

As Christians, we should incorporate the Lord in virtually everything we do. The Word says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (**Colossians 3:23**). That means our work is not separated from our worship. Our attitude, our speech, our service, our standards, and our dealings with people should all reflect that we belong to the Lord.

Remember, disciple-making does not have to happen only in Bible class. Our Christian identity affects everything we do because we are Christians twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Gospel applies to every part of life. We cannot be Christians only in church settings. We are called to live, speak, serve, work, lead, train, and love as followers of Jesus everywhere.

Paul was teaching Timothy to constantly be ready to coach, correct, strengthen, and teach with the Word. He said, "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (**2 Timothy 4:2**). That is not only pulpit language. That is discipleship language. Be ready. Be constant. Be faithful. Bring the Word into real situations with patience, truth, and love.

Every aspect of our life should reflect the principles and values of the Word. If the Word only applies when we are in a meeting, then we have misunderstood the Word. The Gospel speaks to how we raise children, how we do business, how we handle conflict, how we treat customers, how we speak online, how we respond under pressure, and how we make decisions. Discipleship is the process of bringing every part of life under the Lordship of Jesus.

Recently, I needed coaching on how to use social media better. Of course, my ultimate goal is to shine the Lord's truth and love in all my interactions online. But as this person coached me, they kept bringing the Word into the conversation. I thought, "Wow, this person really understands what disciple-making is all about." They were not merely teaching technique. They were helping me think spiritually, wisely, and biblically.

That is what disciple-making does. It does not only say, "Do this." It helps people understand why they should do it, how it connects to the Word, and how it reflects the heart of Jesus. Disciple-making is not just transferring information. It is training people to interpret life through the Word of God.

We understand that with children, training has to be consistent and continual. Solomon said, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (**Proverbs 22:6**). It is the same in disciple-making. Consistency is the name of the game. One conversation is good, but a lifestyle of instruction is better. One lesson can help, but repeated training forms the heart.

Incidentally, the book of Proverbs is awesome for coaching and disciple-making because it is filled with keys to wisdom, character, discipline, diligence, speech, money, correction, relationships, and the fear of the Lord. Proverbs teaches us how to live with practical wisdom. It gives us language for daily discipleship.

Jesus did not tell us merely to gather believers. He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (**Matthew 28:19-20**). That means discipleship is not only information. It is training people to observe, obey, and live the teachings of Jesus.

The Great Commission is not only for missionaries, pastors, or formal church programs. It is also for families. It begins with the people God has placed closest to us. It is a call to make disciples, starting with the people in our own homes.

When this becomes a joy, not a burden, when it becomes natural, not manufactured, and when it becomes intentional, not left to chance, then we can truly say that missions are part of the foundation of the home. Then our families can become a force, shining godly values all around us.

The Word says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (**Deuteronomy 6:5-7**).

Notice the rhythm. When you sit in your house. When you walk by the way. When you lie down. When you rise up. That is not occasional discipleship. That is daily discipleship. That is coaching with the Word in the normal flow of life.

Family discipleship should lead to an overflow of the good news to people outside the home, at work, at school, at play, and around the community. When the home is filled with the Word, it should not stay locked inside the home. It should overflow into witness, service, kindness, generosity, truth, and light.

As parents, we have the divine task of teaching our children Who God is and what He is like. If the goal of our discipleship is to help them trust in Christ, then almost any moment can become a teaching moment. We can use daily situations to show them the trustworthiness of Jesus, the goodness of God, the wisdom of the Word, and the faithfulness of the Father.

Remind your children of what God has done in the past. Point out what you see Him doing in their lives now. Speak with faith about what you are believing Him to do in the future. God is a personal God, and parents have the opportunity to continually reintroduce their families to Him through daily testimonies.

Make friends with other disciple-making parents so you can compare notes, encourage one another, and sharpen iron together. The Word says, “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (**Proverbs 27:17**). This also helps your children have friends who are being encouraged in the same biblical training and values.

The Word says, “We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done” (**Psalms 78:4**). That is the heart of discipleship. We do not hide the works of God. We tell them. We repeat them. We teach them. We pass them on.

Disciple-making is coaching with the Word. It is bringing the Word into the home, the workplace, the conversation, the training, the correction, the encouragement, and the daily decisions of life. It is not forced religion. It is the natural overflow of a life that belongs to Jesus.

By the way, I am preparing a gift for you. It is a small memo book that will cover key areas of discipleship so we can memorize the Word and always have it ready on the tip of our tongue when sharing, teaching, and helping others. I pray it will be a blessing.

Stand Up and Stand Out for Jesus!



Unfortunately, many who profess Christ today are afraid to do anything that would make them stand out as peculiar or different from the crowd. They have lost their boldness to take a definite stand for Jesus and to be fearless about what people say or think about them. Many try to figure out just how far they can go without hurting their reputation, position, or comfort.

They are like some of the religious leaders in Jesus' day who believed on Him, but would not confess Him openly. The Word says, "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (**John 12:42-43**). They did not want to be outstanding followers of Jesus because they feared being rejected, criticized, or labeled as "fools for Christ's sake" (**1 Corinthians 4:10**).

Many Christians rarely dare to be different or venture to vary from the norm. They try to tiptoe along very carefully in their walk with the Lord and not disturb anybody. How unlike the Christians of the early body of believers, of whom it was said, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (**Acts 17:6**).

They were called disturbances, all right. But names like Paul, Peter, Stephen, and Philip live on to this very day, and their influence is still felt, while the passive compromisers simply faded into the background. The people who stand for truth may not always be comfortable in their generation, but they become witnesses that continue speaking long after they are gone.

Naaman's story gives us a serious warning about the tension between private conviction and public compromise. Naaman was not an ordinary man. He was the commander of the Syrian army, second only to the king, a man of great position and influence. He had been miraculously healed from leprosy after going down to see Elisha in Israel, and after that healing he confessed that there was no God in all the earth except the God of Israel (**2 Kings 5:15**).

What kind of witness was that to the nation when they saw him walking into the Temple of Rimmon with the King? They must have doubted the stories they'd heard about him being healed by the God of Israel. "Maybe it was the god, Rimmon, who healed him. After all, we see him worshipping there every day with the king" (2Kings 5).

But then came the test of public witness. When the king of Syria would enter the temple of Rimmon, a false god worshiped by the Syrians, Naaman knew he

would be expected to go with him. He said to Elisha, “The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing” (**2 Kings 5:18**).

Now, Elisha told him, “Go in peace” (**2 Kings 5:19**), so we must be careful not to say more than the text says. But Naaman’s story still makes us think. What happens when private faith is placed under public pressure? What happens when reputation, position, and access to powerful people begin to press against open loyalty to God? Naaman had influence. He had a testimony. He had experienced the power of the true God. The question is whether that testimony would remain clear when it cost him something.

There is no place for neutrality or compromise in the Christian life. Jesus said, “He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad” (**Matthew 12:30**). The Christian life should be an on-fire, all-out, fully dedicated life devoted to the cause of making Jesus known. The day has come for Christians to stand up and give bold expression to their convictions, to rise up and stand against the forces of darkness with truth, love, courage, and the Word of God.

Boldness is not rudeness. Standing out for Jesus does not mean becoming harsh, proud, or argumentative. It means refusing to hide the truth. It means refusing to be ashamed of Christ. It means refusing to let fear of man silence our witness. A disciple does not need to be loud to be bold, but he must be clear, faithful, courageous, and unashamed.

There is no place in this calling for chameleon-type Christians who change color with every crowd and blend into the surrounding world without conviction or moral courage. That is one of the great problems of Christianity today: hidden believers who try to keep their faith so private that no one around them is ever strengthened, warned, encouraged, or reached by their witness.

Do you practice your faith secretly for fear of the opinions of men? Or do you have the conviction and Christian courage to stand openly with the faithful believers of all ages, to stand up for your faith at every opportunity, no matter what it may cost in popularity or position?

Jesus said, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth” (**Revelation 3:15-16**). With God, there is no halfway surrender. There is no comfortable middle ground where we keep Jesus as a private belief but refuse Him as a public Lord. He calls us to be wholehearted.

Jesus Himself “made Himself of no reputation” (**Philippians 2:7**). He was also “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (**Isaiah 53:3**). Yet many Christians today are not willing to be the least bit despised for Him. Many shrink back when they should speak out for Jesus, shun the opinions of men, and dare to take a stand for the truth of God’s Word.

Look how much Jesus suffered for us, and yet how little many of us are willing to suffer for Him. The Word says, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (**1 John 3:16**). If He laid down His life for us, then our lives no longer belong to fear, comfort, reputation, or convenience. They belong to Him.

We ought to be willing to lay down our lives in love, service, sacrifice, witness, and obedience, doing whatever we can to reach as many people as we can while we still can. There is no greater work in the world than to witness the Word of God, preach the Gospel, tell people about God’s love, and show them the love of Jesus.

There is a meaningful story about an old lady whose son was appointed “Ambassador to the Court of St. James,” meaning he was appointed as the American ambassador to England. That was considered one of the greatest ambassadorships in the world, especially in the days when the British Empire was at the height of its influence. But when friends came to her with the great news, instead of being overjoyed, she nearly wept.

She sadly shook her head and said, “To think that he might have become an ambassador of the Gospel, and he dwindled down to nothing but an ambassador to England.”

Think of that. He could have been an ambassador, not merely of the United States, but of the Kingdom of Heaven. He could have represented the greatest King of all, the King of kings, Jesus. He could have been an ambassador not just to one country, but to the whole world, carrying the message of the greatest Kingdom there will ever be.

And that appointment is open to you. The Word says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ” (**2 Corinthians 5:20**). Will you take that calling seriously? In this whole world, there is no higher position than to be a child of God, and no greater honor than to stand up for Jesus and be a witness for Him.

So stand up. Stand out. Shine the light. Refuse the fear of man. Refuse the praise of men when it competes with the praise of God. Refuse to be a hidden believer when Jesus has called you to be the light of the world. The world does not need more silent Christians. It needs disciples who are bold, loving, faithful, and unashamed of Jesus.

How Christianity Becomes a Winning Lifestyle



The one thing that can keep you from being a total winner and living a winning lifestyle every day is having one foot in the world and one foot in the Kingdom of God. A divided life cannot walk in full victory. A double loyalty will always weaken spiritual authority, spiritual clarity, and spiritual fruit.

A winning lifestyle is not a worldly lifestyle with Christian language attached to it. It is not measured by comfort, popularity, money, applause, or ease. A winning lifestyle is a life surrendered to the victory of Jesus, governed by the Word of God, separated from the spirit of the world, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to bear fruit.

Look at it this way: Jesus has already won. He said, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (**Matthew 28:18**). He disarmed the powers of darkness. The Word says that He spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them through the cross (**Colossians 2:15**). Jesus is not trying to win. He has already won.

But for us to walk fully empowered and fully victorious, we must fully follow in His footsteps. Jesus said, “Go ye 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: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (**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 at the new birth as sons of God on the earth, equipped to live under the authority of God and to bring His will, truth, love, and freedom into the world around us.

The Word says, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (**1 John 3:8**). Jesus came to destroy the works of darkness, and now He sends His disciples to continue His mission in His Name. We do this through faith, obedience, prayer, love, truth, service, healing, deliverance, witness, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

But the main requirement is to shun the things of the world and live by the laws of God. Jesus prayed, “I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I

pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (**John 17:14-16**).

The whole world is waiting for Christians to manifest the life of Christ. The Word says, “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” (**Romans 8:19**). The world would be very different if believers walked daily in the fullness of Christ, doing what Jesus did: loving people, preaching truth, healing the sick, setting captives free, serving the broken, and shining light in dark places.

The Word says, “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 10:38**). That is the model. Jesus went about doing good. He did not merely talk about victory. He demonstrated the Kingdom of God in love, power, compassion, and truth.

Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest of the prophets, yet He also said, “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 through Christ, we have been brought into the Kingdom, born again, filled with the Spirit, and given authority to walk as witnesses of Jesus in the earth.

That is pretty awesome when you really think about it. And that is not all. Jesus said that many prophets and kings desired to see what His disciples were seeing and hear what they were hearing. He said, “Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them” (**Luke 10:24**).

Think about that. Men like Moses, David, Elijah, and the prophets looked forward to the day of fulfillment. They longed to see what we have been given in Christ. We are living on this side of the cross, this side of the resurrection, this side of Pentecost, and this side of the finished work of Jesus. That should awaken something in us.

Doesn’t that make you want to be all that God has called you to be? Doesn’t that make you want to get hold of your Bible, absorb the truth about your new identity, understand the authority given to you in Christ, and start living it out? Faith is not admiring truth from a distance. Faith is walking out what appears impossible to man but is possible with God.

Jesus said, “With God all things are possible” (**Matthew 19:26**). There is no impossibility too great for God, but faith must remain surrendered to His will, His Word, and His timing. We do not use faith as presumption. We use faith as confidence in the God Who cannot fail.

Jesus also said, “Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That 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 saith shall come to pass; He shall have whatsoever He saith” (**Mark 11:22-23**). Faith speaks, faith obeys, faith stands, and faith acts on the Word of God.

But the key is to stay clear of the things of the world. James said, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (**James 4:4**). That is not soft language. The Word is telling us plainly that we cannot be loyal to the world and loyal to God at the same time.

There is a serious reason why we need to stay away from the world. The Word says, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (**1 John 5:19**). The world system is not neutral. It is shaped by desires, pride, deception, rebellion, and the influence of the evil one. A disciple must understand this clearly.

The Word says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (**1 John 2:15-17**).

That is why the mind must be renewed. The Word says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (**Romans 12:2**). You cannot live a winning Christian life with an unrenewed mind. If the world shapes your thinking, the world will shape your decisions. But when the Word renews your mind, your life begins to align with the will of God.

The Word also says, “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (**1 John 4:4**). That is victory language. The enemy is real, but he is not greater. The world system is strong, but it is not greater. The pressure is real, but it is not greater. Greater is He Who is in you.

Paul told 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**). A soldier cannot afford unnecessary entanglement. A disciple cannot afford divided devotion. We are called to please the One Who chose us.

Jesus also warned that “the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful” (**Mark 4:19**). Notice the danger. The Word can be present, but choked. The seed can be sown, but made unfruitful. That is what happens when

the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things are allowed to crowd the heart.

But the Word says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (**Galatians 5:1**). Christ has made us free. The winning lifestyle is not going back to bondage after being delivered. It is standing fast in the liberty of Christ and refusing to be entangled again.

The Word says, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (**Romans 8:37**). It also says, “Thanks be to God, Which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (**1 Corinthians 15:57**). Victory is not self-confidence. Victory is Christ-confidence. Victory is not worldly success with Bible verses attached.

Victory is living from the finished work of Jesus.

This is how Christianity becomes a winning lifestyle: not by mixing with the world, not by copying the world, not by chasing the world’s definition of success, but by standing in Christ’s victory, obeying His Word, walking in His Spirit, and refusing to be entangled again with bondage.

Jesus has already won. Our calling is to follow Him fully and live from the victory He has already secured. One foot in the world and one foot in the Kingdom will never produce the full life of a disciple. But a surrendered life, a separated heart, a renewed mind, and a Spirit-empowered walk will carry the victory of Jesus into every area of life.

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, raise families, do business, and walk the same streets? If so, what makes their faith visible? What makes their life different?

A Christian is not supposed to be known merely by a label, a church attendance record, or religious language. A Christian is supposed to be known by the life of Christ being seen through him. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (**John 13:35**). So the question is not only, “What do Christians believe?” The question is also, “Can people see Christ in the way they live?”

Imagine a conversation between two Roman officials in the early days of the Christian movement, after the disciples had been filled with the Holy Spirit and the message of Jesus had begun spreading beyond Jerusalem.

A new Roman official arrived in Jerusalem and met with an older officer who had already observed this growing group called Christians. The new official had heard many rumors about them. He had heard that they followed a man named Jesus, Who had been crucified under Pontius Pilate, and yet His followers claimed He had risen from the dead. He had also heard that this movement was spreading throughout the empire, not by military force, not by political power, but by witness, love, courage, and a strange spiritual boldness.

Troubled by what he had heard, the new official asked, “What is a Christian? What makes them Christian? How do they act? What power do they have? In other words, how can one recognize one of these people?”

The older officer replied, “I have heard all the accusations against them. I have heard that they are fanatics, stubborn, and uninterested in the glory of Rome. But I have also observed something else. They are not violent. They gather together, yes, but not as rebels with weapons. They gather as a family, as if they belong to one another.

“Not only are they not violent, but they are compassionate and merciful. Not only toward each other, but even toward their enemies. They are long-suffering. Most of them are happy, joyous, exceedingly so.

“You try to catch them in wrongdoing, but to the contrary, they are truthful. They are good citizens. They are honest and have integrity. They are not greedy. Many of them are humble, even though they speak with boldness and authority. They may sit in the lowest place at gatherings, but somehow they still shine, as if they carry a light, a wisdom in their speech.

“They speak in love, as if they look at the heart when speaking to people rather than merely looking at the outside of a man. They themselves seem to possess so little, yet they say they are rich: rich in love, rich in freedom, rich in hope, and rich in their God.

“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 grain of wheat dying in order to bear fruit. She said their Master taught, ‘Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit’ (**John 12:24**). She told me that this is not only a saying to them, but a principle of life. They live to die to themselves so that their Christ, Who they insist is resurrected, may live in them and through them.

“They live in hope. They are separated from the riches and lusts of this world, as if they are looking at things we cannot see. They believe in a spiritual Kingdom greater than the kingdoms of men. They pray together. They receive much persecution, but they do not seem ruled by fear. They are willing to suffer for the sake of that Kingdom of the Spirit. 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. Sometimes they speak in languages I do not understand, and they praise their God, Whom they say they love with passion.

“They do not dress differently from everyone else, but they live differently. They are very united. They walk humbly, and therefore there is very little strife among them. They do not envy each other’s possessions, and they are not proud. Even when you try to provoke them, many of them answer with patience, as if they truly care for you. They may look meek, but they are like disciplined warriors, focused, steady, and deeply convinced.

“Many of them pray for the sick, and there are testimonies of healing among them. They have prayed for soldiers’ families, servants, slaves, and strangers. They do not seem to choose compassion based on status.

“You can also find them near prisons, not as criminals, but visiting, encouraging, praying, and speaking of deliverance. They speak of freedom, not merely from chains of iron, but from sin, fear, darkness, and evil spirits.

“You meet them talking to beggars. You see them helping the wounded. They even tell stories from their Master about showing mercy to people others would normally despise. They care for people who can never repay them. They give dignity to those Rome would easily ignore.

“They are different, all right, because they do not seem to desire the world that Rome offers. Yet, at the same time, they respect authority and seek peace. They are unusual, to say the least. But they are peaceful. They do not lie. They do not steal. They do not waste their speech in empty babbling. They speak evil of no one. They are kind toward everyone, and they forgive whoever hurts them.

“Of all citizens, they are the ones who seem to walk in love the most. They do not live in debauchery. I would say they are completely captured by this Jesus doctrine. People do not like the fact that they are so close to each other, almost fitly joined together. They depend on each other. But on the other hand, they are also among the most generous people in the community, not only toward their own, but also toward the poor.

“One woman I met paid for my meal and then gave the servant a generous gift. But what surprised me most was not the money. It was the way she spoke to him. She spoke to him as a dignified member of society and told him that God loved him. A servant, and yet she treated him as if heaven itself valued him.

“They have beautiful families, and their children are well trained. You will not see them drunk, but sometimes you may think they are because they sing so loudly and joyfully. Their joy is strange. It does not seem to depend on circumstances.

“Many of them have suffered severely because of their faith. Some have been mocked, imprisoned, beaten, and publicly punished. But this is what I cannot understand: they do not curse us. They pray. They sing. They speak of forgiveness. They face suffering as if they are looking at something beyond Rome, beyond death, beyond this present world.

“There is one more thing I do not understand. They often receive the strongest opposition from religious leaders, the very people who should have understood their Messiah. It is as though those leaders are envious of the freedom these Christians carry. They call them a sect. They mock them as followers of the crucified One. Yet they are the least troublesome citizens, and somehow the most dangerous to every false system, because they cannot be bought, silenced, or easily controlled.”

Now, this is only an imagined conversation, but it gives us a picture of what Christians should look like to the world. They should be recognizable, not because they are strange for the sake of being strange, but because Christ is visible in them.

The Word says, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” (**Matthew 5:14**). Jesus did not say we might become the light of the world if people approve of us. He said we are the light of the world. And light is not difficult to recognize. When light enters a dark place, darkness notices.

The early disciples were recognizable because they had been with Jesus. The Word says of Peter and John, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (**Acts 4:13**). That is one of the greatest things anyone could ever say about us: they could tell we had been with Jesus.

A Christian should also be recognized by the fruit of the Spirit. The Word says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (**Galatians 5:22-23**). These are not decorations for religious people. These are evidences of the life of the Spirit. If the Spirit of Christ lives in us, then the character of Christ should be formed in us.

A Christian should be recognized by honorable conduct. The Word says, “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God” (**1 Peter 2:12**). That means even when people accuse us, our lives should eventually testify against their accusations.

A Christian should be recognized by a renewed mind. The Word says, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (**Romans 12:2**). If we think exactly like the world, desire exactly what the world desires, chase exactly what the world chases, and react exactly how the world reacts, then what difference is the world supposed to see?

This does not mean Christians are perfect. It means Christians are being transformed. It means there is a visible direction. It means there is fruit. It means there is repentance, humility, love, truth, courage, generosity, purity, and a growing likeness to Jesus.

So how can you spot those Christians? You spot them by their love. You spot them by their joy. You spot them by their peace. You spot them by their courage under pressure. You spot them by their mercy toward the weak. You spot them by their refusal to lie, steal, envy, hate, or repay evil for evil. You spot them by their hunger for the Word. You spot them by their prayer. You spot them by their unity. You spot them by the way they treat the poor, the broken, the servant, the stranger, and even the enemy.

A Christian is not spotted first by religious language, church attendance, or outward labels. A Christian is recognized because Christ can be seen in his love, heard in his words, felt in his compassion, and proven through his obedience.

The world should not have to guess forever whether we belong to Jesus. If Christ is in us, then Christ should be seen through us. If the Holy Spirit lives in us, then the fruit of the Spirit should come out of us. If we have been with Jesus, someone should be able to tell.

That is the real mark of Christianity. Not noise. Not performance. Not religious costume. Not empty talk. The mark is Christ in us, the hope of glory, shining through ordinary people in ordinary life until the world has to ask, “What makes them different?”

Thoughts on Christianity



Before we close, let these thoughts settle the matter in your heart. Christianity is not a decoration, a weekend habit, or a religious label. Christianity is the life of Christ lived through surrendered people. These thoughts are short, but they carry the weight of everything we have established: faith must become life, belief must become obedience, and discipleship must become visible.

If you want to understand the difference between discipleship and church-only Christianity, it is simple. They may claim to be on the same team, but they are not functioning the same way. Spectator Christians are fans of Jesus Christ. Christian disciples are players on the field with Jesus Christ. Jesus has always had more fans than followers.

Faith makes a Christian. Life proves a Christian. Trial confirms a Christian. Death crowns a Christian.

Christ plus surrendered people equals Christianity.

If your Christianity will not work where you are, it will not work anywhere.

A Christian is not merely 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 making your way through this world.

Two marks of a Christian: giving and forgiving.

Ask yourself: is my faith a steering wheel, or only a spare wheel?

Believers are not hired servants trying to support themselves by their own work. They are children maintained by their Father's provision.

Christianity is not about escaping every difficulty of life. It is about learning how to face life with Christ, through Christ, and for Christ.

C. S. Lewis described Christianity as the rightful King entering enemy-occupied territory and calling His people to join His great campaign against darkness. That campaign is not violence. It is the overthrow of darkness by truth, love, holiness, prayer, and the Gospel.

Christianity can be condensed into four words: admit, submit, commit, transmit.

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 person who is better than someone else, but one who is better than he would be if he were not in Christ.

Some Christians want to be counted in, but not counted on.

God is not only a present help in times of trouble, He is also a great help in keeping us out of trouble.

A Christian has not lost the ability to sin, but the old love of sin has been broken.

Satan is never too busy to rock the cradle of a sleeping Christian.

A real Christian is as grieved by his own sins as he is by his neighbor's.

Here is one definition of a Christian:

He loves the truth and stands by it.

He knows the game and he plays it.

He hears a lie and confronts it with truth.

He loves God's Word and he reads it.

He seeks God's will and he heeds it.

If you want to defend Christianity, practice it.

Christianity requires the participants to come down out of 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 many Christians need is fewer platitudes and better attitudes.

A lukewarm Christian may make a good bench-warmer, but he makes a poor heart-warmer.

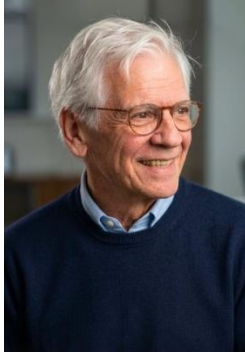
So do not leave this book as a fan in the grandstand. Come down onto the field. Practice what you believe. Show what you confess. Live what you have received. The world does not need more silent spectators. It needs disciples who make it easier for others to believe in God because they can see Christ in them.

Christianity was never meant to remain hidden inside church walls, private thoughts, or religious words. It was meant to be lived, practiced, demonstrated, and transmitted. Admit the truth.

Submit to Jesus. Commit to obedience. Transmit the life of Christ to others.

This is the discipline of a disciple. This is the life of a follower. This is Christianity made visible.

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.

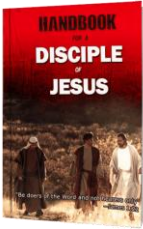
Through scorching African heat and the heart-wrenching realities of Liberian refugee camps, they have lived out what it means to be Christ's hands and feet in our broken world. After two decades in Asia, they spent yet another decade in Africa pouring their lives into these displaced communities, turning 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.

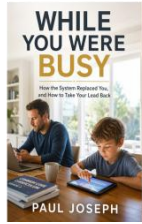
The handbook is just the beginning. Paul's library of books and daily devotionals continues to light the way for believers worldwide, offering practical wisdom forged in the fires of real-world ministry. His writings do not just tell you what to do—they show you how to do it, drawing from frontline experience in disciple-making.

Want to dive deeper into these resources and discover tools for your own spiritual journey? Visit faithwithoutborders.us to explore Paul's complete collection of works and ministry resources.

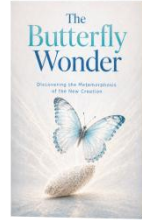
Other Books by Paul



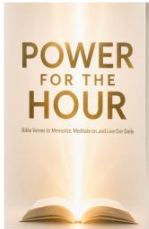
The Handbook for a Disciple of Jesus



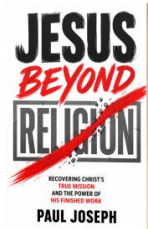
While You Were Busy



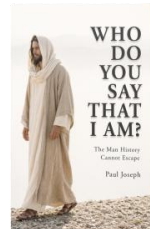
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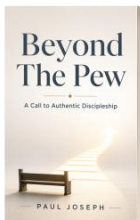
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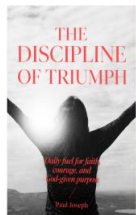
Jesus Beyond Religion



Who Do You Say That I Am



Beyond the Pew



The Discipline of Triumph

The Discipline of A Disciple is a bold and uncompromising call back to the real meaning of following Jesus.

The message is direct: Jesus did not call people merely to admire Him, quote Him, attend meetings about Him, or use His name when convenient. He said, "Follow Me." He said, "Deny yourself." He said, "Take up your cross."

Too many people want Jesus as Savior in name but not Lord in practice. They want comfort without the cross, blessing without obedience, power without surrender, and church without discipleship. But there is no neutrality in Christianity.

This book confronts casual belief, comfortable church attendance, lukewarm faith, secret Christianity, and powerless religion.



True conversion must become discipleship.

Discipleship must become obedience.

Obedience must become power.

Power must become witness.

And disciples must make disciples.