

**A
BIBLE STUDY
ON
BECOMING
A
DISCIPLE OF
JESUS**

BY Pastor W. Jack Casey

INTRODUCTION

As we start this study on becoming a disciple of Jesus I want to say being saved does not automatically make you a disciple. There are those who will spend their Christian lives and not be a disciple. Let me use Michelangelo when he was a boy went to a renowned sculptor to present himself to be his next pupil. The old sculptor tested him by saying “this will take all your life”. Michelangelo replied “what else is life for?”

Michelangelo knew this that for life to have any real meaning one must be committed to something. A person not committed to something or someone will live a diminished life! In contrast the happiest people are those who are committed to something in their lives.

Now in the New Testament those who followed Jesus in a committed way as the 12 did these were called “disciples”. The usual definition given for a disciple is learner or follower, however the word has a deeper meaning and that is “thought accompanied by endeavor”. So a disciple is not just a student sitting in a classroom it is more and our first lesson will help us see this in Becoming a Disciple of Jesus.

How to Study Your Bible

1. Begin in Prayer 1 Cor 2: 9-14
2. Read the Bible Neh. 8: 1-3
3. Study the Bible Neh. 8:8
4. Meditate upon it Deut. 6:6-9; Ps. 1
5. Pass the Bible on to others Heb. 5: 12

How to Study Each Chapter

1. The Theme
 2. The most important verse
 3. The most prominent word
 4. The teaching about Christ
 5. The command to obey
 6. The promise to claim
 7. The new truth learned Psalm 119:18
- Also every verse or passage has at least 3 applications
1. Past: this is the historical application
 2. Present: This is a devotional or spiritual application
 3. Future: This is a doctrinal or prophetic application

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LESSON ONE

Real Discipleship

Five things involved in being a real disciple

I. There is taking on Jesus yoke: Matt. 28-29

"come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Before salvation we are yoked to sins, burdens, etc. Christ wants us yoked to Him.

Jesus is emphasizing taking on the role of servant and learning from Him what that means and then putting that into practice or endeavor. The other symbol Christ will use will also be of wood and that being the cross as we read in Luke 14:27 *"and whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple."* The cross is a symbol of submission, and the yoke is that of service. When you put both of these together then you have a more complete picture of a Real Disciple as a real disciple is ready for either the cross (sacrifice) or service (yoke).

Besides the yoke of Jesus we need to

II. Continue In The Word!: John 8:31

"then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;" Becoming a real disciple is very much like getting married. Saying the vows are easy and only the beginning but there is a great deal more to a marriage than the ceremony. It is a commitment followed by a deep continuing relationship.

So what does it mean to "continue" in Jesus Word? It is to feed upon it daily as long as one has breath. A person does not continue to gain knowledge for the sake of knowledge so that we can impress everyone with the facts and tidbits of what we know. Much rather the purpose of our study of the Bible is to change our lives.

This change may occur slowly at times and at others there may well be a large step forward in change. Either way these changes work to make us more like Christ and what a real disciple should be. Once we take the yoke and continue in the word next comes.

III. Choosing to Love:

In John's gospel Chapter 13 down in verses 34 & 35 Jesus tells His disciples this *"a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciple if ye have love one to another."* Jesus here gives a clear unmistakable command that real disciples will exhibit love for one another. Each person daily can chose to hate, ignore, or love anyone these are

volitional acts. We can do them or not do them as we are not helpless victims of our emotions.

However where other believers are concerned Jesus commanded us to love each other. Now He said love not necessarily “like” and there can be a difference. For example I love my children however I do not always like their behavior. We may not always like another believer’s actions but we are commanded to love them.

One writer from years ago had this to say *“when Jesus said, by this shall all men know that ye are my disciple. He gave the world the right to judge us by our love.”* A love not just toward Jesus or toward other church members but a love to all who are heavy laden like we once were when Jesus loved us.

Now we have accepted the yoke of service and the word and the command to love next comes.

IV. Living a Cleansed Life:

Having all the rest of these one needs a clean life for God to be able to bless them and work through them. Now the Bible defines two types of Christians let’s read of the carnal one first in 1st Cor. 3: 1-3 “and I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. for ye are yet carnal for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?”

Paul is calling those in the Corinthian church carnal because of the sin being practiced which Paul lays out. This church could not have many true disciples because their lives were a mess. However Paul describes the proper Spiritual life for us in Gal. 6:1-2 “Brethern if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

As you can see there are two ways defined here. You must choose one of these two options you either be a spiritual disciple of Jesus or a carnal one. If you are not living a victorious Christian life, it is because you are a carnal disciple. Real discipleship takes the disciple out of the carnal and into the spiritual.

Lastly there is.

V. Surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ:

In Luke 14: 25-35 we find one of Jesus key teachings of discipleship. Notice three times in this passage Jesus says “He cannot be my disciple” each time it goes before one of His demands of real discipleship.

The first one is staggering to read even shocking as He says “hate”. What He is doing is using an exaggeration for effect. Jesus would never want us to actually hate our families but our love for Him in

comparison to our love for our families must be so much greater that it would be the difference between love and hate. It has been said "*Jesus must be Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all!*".

The next demand is in verse 27 which is a reiteration of Luke 9:23. Jesus followers would know what this meant as they had seen it many times. You see when the Romans crucified a criminal they were made to carry their cross to their execution site. They were led through the most populous part of the city as public admission to the authority of Rome. Notice carefully in both verses Jesus did not say "*Be nailed to your cross*" but *bear or take up your cross*.

What Jesus is doing in verses 28-33 is making two significant points that real discipleship must include planning and sacrifice? First he uses that of a builder (28-30) He built after he counted the cost to see if he could finish the project.

The second is of a king who only went into battle after counting the cost (31-32). So we see discipleship is costly but to not follow Christ is even more costly look here at John 3:36 He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him". Verses 34-35 here has Jesus sum up real discipleship by comparing real discipleship with salt. You see salt without it's flavor just isn't salt and discipleship without real commitment just isn't discipleship. Real discipleship is a journey that takes a life time.

LESSON TWO

Who God Is?

Every disciple needs to know what God is really like. Why you may be asking? Because He is in every area of our lives, our behavior, attitudes, outlook on life all are affected by our concept of God.

It is vital that we know what God is like without knowing this you cannot understand who He is. As we learn who He is the more we will be willing to surrender our lives in discipleship. Knowing what God the Father is like gives us a better understanding of what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

Now the Father did not leave a mystery He provided His word the Bible to reveal Himself to mankind and through it we can know Him and have a deep personal relationship with Him. For this section we will look at His nature, attributes, and virtues.

I. The Nature of God

For this study we start in Deut. 6:4 “Hear o Israel the LORD our God is one LORD.” The word LORD here is “Elohim which is a plural word meaning more than two. The word God here is “Jehovah” and means one God singular. Jesus refers to this verse in Matt. 22: 38 and Mark 12: 29-30. Israel was to hear that the LORD (all caps) is one God or to say the plural God was one God in this the property of God are contained the love and doctrine. Listen to Isaiah in 45:5 “I am the LORD and there is none else, there is no God beside me.” also Paul in 1 Tim. 2:5 “ For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; one God maker, governor and preserver of all men. Christianity is not poly (many) theistic (God) but mono (single) theistic (God). Jesus himself made this clear by taking from Deut. 6:4 and quoting it for His disciples in Mark 12:29 “ The first of all the commandments is Hear, o Israel, The LORD our God is one LORD.” He continued that God was to be loved with all of one’s spirit, soul, and body.

Jesus added also in John 4:24 “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” God is not physical He is not limited by a body like ours. At the same time He is personal in that He is not just some impersonal force. The Bible says in different places that He has arms, feet, a mouth, a heart and other body parts in figurative language to describe God’s functions. Our heavenly Father is infinite and cannot be contained in a body or a building.

Knowing our finite minds would have difficulty understanding He gave us in His word a revelation of Himself in John 1:14, 18 and 14:9 the word in these verses “declared” in verse 18 means (exegete) to declare or give a detailed analysis.

II. The Attributes of God

Here we will look at the four primary attributes of God and to do this we need to go to Psalm 139: 7-10 for the first one we also need to reference Jeremiah 23: 23-24 first 7-10 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? David so rightly asks where the place where Jehovah isn't is. The only answer nowhere! Then proceeds to define it in verse 8 "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou are there. 9: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea. 10: Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

This is called Omni-presence or the fact that God is everywhere and the world cannot contain Him. This should bring a comfort to us let's read Matt. 28: 20 the last part says "and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world amen" and also Joshua 1:5 "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

The second attribute of God is given to us in Psalm 139: 1-6 "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising thou understandest my thoughts afar off (before we think them) Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo O Lord, thou knowest it all together. Thou hast but beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." This is also described in Psalm 147: 4-5; Matt. 10: 29-30, and Pro. 11: 33-36.

So we see from Psalm 139 that David understood that God had the ability to thoroughly investigate him and know every detail of this man called David. Even more than that God the Father knows everything, there is no knowledge unknown to Him. There isn't a secret word or deed hidden from Him. He knows every hair on every head of every person on planet Earth today, not just how many but the very DNA structure.

There is nothing for God to learn or find out, we spend our lives learning and discovering new things. God already knows it all. The most intelligent person on Earth doesn't come close to knowing it all.

The third attribute here is God's omnipotence or that He is all powerful. Let's read (Ps.121:1-2) Jeremiah 32: 27 Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh is there any thing too hard for me? God is in supreme control of all creation. In Matt. 19: 26 Jesus said "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." God being all powerful also makes Him Sovereign or in supreme control.

So let us see God is first everywhere and also He knows everything before it ever happens for each of us making His knowledge superior and since He is all powerful and capable of doing anything then these 3 together give Him the Sovereign right to govern in the affairs of men.

The fourth attribute of God is His Immutability. Let's look at Malachi 3:6 "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Also James 1:17 "cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" God never changes His nature. He is constantly active in all things and He can and does change His method of achieving His purpose. God our Father expresses His immutability in an endless variety of methods (Nm. 14: 30-31; Jer. 31: 31-34) God's nature however never changes.

III. The Virtues of God

For now we will look at three that are basic to our understanding of God!

First is Holiness which is to "set apart" or to be "separated". This word used of God shows us that He is unlike any other (Is. 6: 1-3). Holiness when used of God describes His infinite perfection. He is so Holy that He cannot be touched, influenced or defiled by evil. For the Lord Holiness is more than mere separation from evil, He is the very embodiment of Holiness. Once anyone comes to see God's holiness for all it is then they can see themselves for what we are as Isaiah did in Is. 6:5.

The second virtue is Righteousness. Holiness is more of His character. Righteousness has to do with His dealing with people. Hear what David said in Psalm 19:9 "the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Paul adds this in Romans 2:11 "For there is no respect of persons with God." His righteousness is clean and pure and exercised equally among all men in right justice.

The third virtue is TRUTH God is trust worthy, infallible, and perfectly reliable. With God there is never a falsehood or lack of consistency. Jesus said He was the same yesterday, today and forever and the Bible also says of God there is no variableness or shadow of turning. Jesus said in His High Priestly prayer recorded in John 17: 17 " Sanctify them through thy truth thy word is truth" Not only is He true but He constantly reveals that truth so we may respond to it and come to know Him better.

The last virtue is GOODNESS it has in it three others Love, Grace and Mercy. To understand these is to understand the goodness of God. First there is Love (1 John 4:8) this is His attitude toward all of mankind. He loves man so much that there was no sacrifice too great to not bring us to Him. His love is also perfect in that it is not just words as is the case so often in too many people's lives (1 John 4:9 and Romans 5:8). I would think knowing how much God loves us should bring comfort to our hearts. We also see Grace, now this is what God gives to those who call on Him instead of what they deserve read Titus 2: 11-14. We in our sinfulness deserved hell and God in His love provides Grace instead. Last there is in God's goodness Mercy, you see Grace is not getting what you deserve, and mercy is getting what we do not deserve

LESSON THREE

Who Man Is

Now this study is about all of mankind not just men. David asks our question in Psalm 8 “What is man that thou art mindful of him?” This is a good question and David adds to it in Psalm 139: 14 “I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully, made marvelous are thy works”. God made man singularly unique in this world. He made us in His own image, Paul gives us a look at that in 1 Thess. 5: 23 “and I pray God your whole spirit soul and body be preserved blameless”. Body here is all that is physical and created out of the dust. Soul here is the seat of all affections and emotions both good and bad. Spirit here is that part of us that makes us conscious of God and knowing right and wrong where sin is concerned it is that which separates us from animals.

I. Man and The Physical World

Let’s read 1 Cor. 6: 19-20 here we see in this passage our body was made to be a dwelling place for God! Paul also in Romans 12:1 tells us that we are to use our bodies as living sacrifices for God’s use. Another passage on this is Romans 6: 12-13 says we are to refrain from all unrighteousness and to use our hands and feet as tools of the gospel.

The body is our means of functioning here on this earth; however it was designed to be more than that. The primary purpose of these bodies is to be the vehicles by which the gospel is spread and His love for man is shown. There is yet more than just the physical aspect of it all.

II. Man’s Soul- The Psychological Part

When the Bible speaks of the soul it is talking about that part of an individual that consists of the Intellect (Pr. 24: 13-14) and the will (Job 6:7) and the emotions (1 Sam. 18:1) “that the souls of Jonathon was knit with the soul of David and Jonathon loved him as his own soul.” The soul, the mind if you will was created by God for a particular purpose. Let’s look at three verses to see this. The first is in Heb. 10:16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them!”

One of God’s prime purpose’s for our minds is to learn and store God’s law as if engraved in stone. Also in Romans 12:2 “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”. The law he puts into our mind is to change us and make us into what we should be. Lastly there is Phil. 2:5 “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” God wants our minds to become just like Jesus mind.

We also find that the Bible uses the word “heart” 700 times in regard to the soul of man. Most often it is centered on the emotions here are some references Rom. 9:2; Ps. 37:4; and Eph. 3:17. Only one verse contains all three words “heart, soul and mind” and that is Matt. 22: 37. Heart in this verse is the seat of emotion, soul here refers to the intellect and mind to one’s will.

In this verse Jesus is saying that we are to love the Lord with the real us not what we see in the mirror that is only the dwelling place of who you are, your make up your personality, disposition, ego and desire. Having seen man’s physical body and his soul we need to look at the final part of man and that is his spirit.

III. Man’s Spirit and the Spiritual World

When we speak of the human spirit we are speaking of a part of man that only the Bible addresses. There are scientific and medical books that deal with physical and psychological health, but only the Bible deals with spiritual health. Without the Bible one might think that the soul and spirit are the same. They are not, the tool to prove this and to separate them is the Sword of God His word which is razor sharp as seen in Hebrew’s 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Man is unique from all other living creatures God made him that way. All living creatures can be divided into three parts- plant, animal and human. Plants have a body but no soul or spirit they have no intellect, emotion or will. Animals have a body and a soul as they demonstrate intelligence in that they can learn. They have emotion such as anger, pain, joy, etc. and a will that at times cannot be broken such as in a Tiger or Lion.

However man is distinct from these former two in that he has a spirit a consciousness of God. Man’s spirit is what causes him to know there is a God look at the following verses Luke 1: 47 and John 4:23 they give us something of the spirit of man. Notice here at Luke 1:47 and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour”. The spirit of man is able to exalt in and rejoice in the knowledge of God as Saviour. Now John 4:23 “true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth”. Our spirit allows us to worship the Father in spirit as He is Spirit.

Because animals do not have a spirit they will never be seen praying or going to church. They have no desire to seek to God. Man only is aware of the creator God (Pr. 20:27). The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly! Paul tells in the following verse that it is our spirit lets read Romans 8:16 “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” that confirms our relationship with God not our soul (emotions).

Paul in 1 Thess. 5: 22-23 tells us what God's desire for our spirit, soul, and body? It is that we be sanctified (set apart) in all 3 parts and preserved (kept) until Jesus comes for us! Each of us must ask the question am I good or evil? Only the Bible holds the answer. God created us for communion with Him. But He also gave us opportunity to exercise free will (decide to obey good or evil) He started with Adam and Eve. The penalty imposed on them was in two parts 1st immediate spiritual death that is separation from God and 2nd eventual physical death!

From their original sin mankind began to degenerate and become depraved. Adam became a sinner by committing sin the rest of us are born sinners. Man is not only a sinner guilty in the sight of God, but he has lost his original relationship he held with God. Though God was or is under no obligation to do so He provided the way to restore that lost relationship through Jesus Christ.

LESSON FOUR

What is Sin?

The primary question for a disciple is the same one's Paul asks of himself. Why am I prone to do bad things? Why must I constantly watch what I say and do? Why is there so much evil, sorrow, suffering, envy, greed and malice all around? Well psychology says its maladjustment. Biology would say it is some sort of disease. Sociology would say it is a bad environment. However the Bible uses other words for mans behavior words such as iniquity, ungodliness, lawlessness, transgression but the word most often used is "SIN" this word has for its meaning "missing the mark".

Where the Bible says "come short" it means a continuous action as in Romans 3:23. The glory we fall short of is found in John 1:14. God's glory is His righteousness and we have come short of it doing so makes us sinners.

I. The Origin Of Sin

Where did sin come from? Where did it originate, well most start in Genesis 3 but it started before then in heaven when the devil originated as recorded in Isaiah 14: 12-15. Here the angel Lucifer conceived 5 sins of rebellion in his heart and for this God cast him out of heaven and he took 1/3 of the rest of the angels with him. In Gen. 3:4-5 we see the reenactment of this earlier fall. The two prime ingredients in both scenes were "selfishness and pride". This is why the Bible so often talks against both of these. So sin started with Satan and it was passed on to the human race through Adam as seen in 1 Cor. 15.

II. The Nature Of Sin

Some deny the existence of it all together while others take great pleasure and revelry in it and then others just laugh about it. The most dangerous attitude toward sin is to downplay its maliciousness. Sin is always active and evil never dormant. Sin is an unwillingness to abide in the realm which God has placed us as we see here in 1 John 3:4 "Everyone that doeth (practices) sin doeth also lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" Men not only miss the mark (definition of sin) they also transgress God's law which is also sin. The word "transgress" means to cross a forbidden border or line. God gave His law to protect and guide and help us to be all we can be for Him. When we obey we only help ourselves. Sin is more than just breaking God's law let's see what James says here in 4: 17 "to him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

III. The Realm of Sin

Sin is universal in more than one way. There is a line of teaching called the “Total Depravity” of man. Now that is not to infer that everyone is devoid of any good, it does mean however that all of us every single soul is corrupt or sinful because we have broken God’s law. Read the following passages as reference to this Luke 18: 11-14; John 3:18-19; James 2:10.

IV. The Results of Sin!

The results of sin fall into 3 categories.

1st immediate results: loss of fellowship with God in our natural state we do not have a relationship with God (Is. 9:2). We do however have an inner sense of loneliness or that something is missing. It is the fellowship we were designed to have with God! For another immediate result look at 1 Cor. 2:14

2nd progressive result: physical death man was originally created to live forever. His food the tree of life but because of sin the moment we are born we begin a path that leads to death physically. The soul and spirit are immortal that is why Paul said if this earthly house dies or is taken away he had a permanent one in glory with Jesus.

3rd ultimate result: spiritual death as seen in 2 Thess. 1:8&9 and Rev. 20: 11-15. The eternal ruin of the soul and spirit is also called the second death in Rev. 20:6 and 21:8. The eternal separation of spirit and soul from God with no hope of any reunion with God this would make mans future seem dreadful but there is good news while one is living in this physical life. There is hope to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour!

LESSON FIVE

Prayer

The Bible gives us admonitions for the practicality of prayer in the Christian life read Eph. 6: 18; Phil 4:6. Regardless of how much a new believer knows he or she must pray if he is to grow and be of service to God.

One of the best analogies of the importance of prayer is that of breathing. Prayer should be to a disciple as breathing is to the body. Let's look at six ingredients for effective prayer.

1st Be aware of whom you are talking too when you pray. Matt. 6:9 and Ph. 4:6 give us to whom our prayers should be directed. In Matt. 6:9 "faith" is a revelation to prayer. With what we learned of God to use a popular word He is "awesome" and some may feel they cannot approach Him. However He is also "goodness" and the love, mercy and grace that is contained within are so we can approach Him as children (John 1:12).

2nd: Be yourself when you pray. Praying should be as natural for a disciple of Jesus as talking to our earthly parents. There is no need to use a lot of the King's English rather just be reverent and quite natural!

3rd: Always pray in Jesus name. Some would lead you to think that doing this makes your prayer a magical formula for success. Others believe to not use Jesus name is like sending a letter with out a stamp. In John 14:13 Jesus said to pray in His name. it was not just to put His name on a prayer rather it is to pray the prayer in the way Jesus would if He were the one praying. To say it this way to voice a prayer that is consistent with the life and teaching of Jesus.

4th For this one we need to turn to Matt. 21:22 and after that to James 1:6. We must believe in the present to receive in the future. Most of us say "seeing is believing" to the disciple of Jesus believing is seeing.

5th : Turn now over to Luke 11: 5-10 here we find the fifth element in three basic words "ask" then "seek" and then "knock" or do not give up asking, seeking and knocking until the answer comes.

6th: Lastly we need forethought. It is a side mistake of believers today to go to their prayer spot with little or no thought of what they are going to say or pray. Many pray as though our "Father" is a divine discerner going through confused petitions.

Now it is true that Romans 8:26 tells us that the Holy Spirit will make intercession for us but that is primarily when we have weakness' and do not know the solution or even where to start. We must not abuse that by being careless in our prayer habits.

With these ingredients God will hear our prayers and may answer in any of 4 ways as I have them listed below.

1. Found in Matt. 8: 5-13 He will say "yes" because of strong faith.
2. Found in 2 Cor. 12: 7-9 He may say "no" so He might receive more glory.

3. Found in Psalm 27:14 and Ps. 40:1 “I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me” He may ask us to wait until He is ready.
4. Found in Jer. 33:1 & Eph 3:20 where it says “exceeding abundantly above” so it is yes no wait or more than expected.

How to Pray Part Two



One of the major problems that we face in our prayer lives is what to pray for. We do not lack for things to pray about but an understanding of the elements of prayer. There are 6 elements of prayer that every disciple should know and use.

I. Confession

The first order of prayer should be “confession” too many rush into God’s presence asking when they should be confessing. Why is that important you ask? Well the answer is found in Ps. 66:18 and it involves our fellowship as it can be broken so we need prayer to maintain it or restore it as seen in 1 John 1:9.

Confession means that we admit to God and not to any man that we are or were wrong and are sorry for it. The following verses list some consequences of failing or neglecting to confess Ps. 51:8, 12; Ps. 32:3-4 now here are the some benefits in the same Ps. 32:1-2 and 51: 13-15. Confession based on true repentance will result in a changed disposition, attitude and actions. Some of the great spiritual victories come as the result of confession. This is the reason Satan works overtime to keep you from doing this very thing. After a time of confession the next logical step is.

II. Adoration

This should be the most important part of prayer but it is also unfortunately one of the more neglected areas. In this part of prayer we express your feelings toward God in responding to His attributes those that we went over earlier.

One of the benefits of this portion of prayer it keeps us keenly aware of whom it is we are talking to and confidence in the rest of the elements of prayer. The following verses contain some of the attributes for which God should be praised. Ps 104: 1, 24; Ps. 145:3; Ps 31: 19; 33:5; 1 Peter 1: 14-16. Once we praise our Father for who He is then we can move to.

III. Thanksgiving

Sometimes we spend too much time asking and not enough time thanking our Father for all He has already done! As we learn and grow in our prayer life a good place to start thanking Him is for those things we tend to take for granted. These include but are not limited to our families, jobs, homes, special people, material blessings, health, previously answered prayer, even adversities from which we have grown spiritually. Psalm 103: 1-5 has 3 very specific items that every believer should give thanks for. After giving thanks we then move to

IV. Intercession

This is where we bring the needs of others before the throne of God. It is not begging but praying with confidence for those needs. The best place to look about intercessory prayer is in Eph. 1:15-19 here we find 3 things Paul prayed for the Ephesians. We also have for our learning is Jesus high priestly prayer in John 17. Intercessory prayer is always concerned with the needs of others. There is another part of intercessory prayer not related to Christians needs and that is praying for the unsaved. In praying for them there are two things to see and put into practice to pray successfully for our lost loved ones read 2 Cor. 4: 3-4; 2 Tim. 2: 26. knowing these we can better pray for the lost. The lost really do not want to go to hell they are in spiritual bondage and blindness. With this in mind we should pray "Lord I am available to do what I can to win them". After intercession we come to

V. Petition

This is asking God to meet certain needs in our own lives. Though some never seem to get past the "give me" stage there certainly is nothing wrong in asking God to meet the needs of our lives. This is something Jesus put into the model prayer He gave the disciples and is. There is a God given limit placed on answering our petition in 1 John 5: 14-15. We must be careful not to confuse "want" with "need" and we need to praise Him for a "yes, no or wait" as His answer will always be best for us in His eternal plan. The last element is

VI. Meditation

Up until now we have done all the talking now it is time to listen to what God has to say meditation needs to be last. The reason being is so we

can get all of us out of the way less we cut short our listening. Most all prayers end with “amen” this means “so be it” or so let it be done and puts us in agreement with what God will do in all the results of our prayers.

LESSON SIX

How to get a firm grip on the Bible

If we are mature and become Christian disciples it is vital that we get a



firm grip on the word of God. Why? Well one of Satan's chief operating tactics is to snatch the word away from our heart so we will not grow in our discipleship. In Matthew 13: 1-19 Jesus gives the parable of the sower and in verse 4 it says "some fell by the way side and the fowls came and devoured them" Jesus gives the meaning of this in verses 18-19 this shows us that Satan desires to steal the word from our hearts.

There are 5 parts to gaining a strong grip on the Bible so we will use our hand once again. If one tries to hold the Bible with just 2 fingers one can easily snatch it away. With 4 fingers and a thumb it is much more difficult. In Paul's two letters to Timothy we find all five parts to a good grip. So let's learn to get a good grip on the Bible.

1st. We Must HEAR the Word of God

Look at what Paul exhorted Timothy to do in 2 Tim. 1:13 "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." And chapter 2:2 "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."

1st Paul tells Timothy to hold fast the sound words of the doctrine of Christ and then Timothy is to teach it to others so they then can teach it to others. Notice carefully Paul never told Timothy to look for something NEW, IMPROVED or anything other than the "sound" words given to Paul by the Holy Spirit.

2nd Jesus gives a command in Matt. 11:15 "He that hath ears let him hear". Now every one has ears so Jesus is speaking of spiritual ears to hear and understand spiritual truths. The best way to increase our hearing is to take notes on what we hear. Research has shown that only hearing say a sermon by the time one leaves the building and starts home an average of only 15% is retained. On the other hand if we take notes such as sermon title, main points and such retention is increased 300%. So hearing is the first step in getting a firm grip on the Bible.

II READ

In 1 Timothy 4:13a Paul says “give attendance to reading”. It has been said that the Bible is “America’s unread best seller”. One reason is that most do not know how to read the Bible, for instance some read it like a novel beginning at Gen. 1 others start in different ways. I would like to give you some simple guidelines to help make Bible reading much more profitable.

1. Set aside a time to read it daily just like for meals, you eat regularly, you should read regularly.
2. Begin your reading in the gospel of John why? Well it is the simplest written, most words are one or two syllables and also it is written with Jesus as the Son of God the Christ of all mankind. Read until you find a verse that speaks to you and then meditate on it and ask how to apply it to your life.
3. use a pencil or pen to underline those verses that speak to you.
4. Share what you have read with someone, it is living water and needs to keep moving so it doesn’t stagnate. This allows the blessings or promise of that verse to increase and overflow to them.
5. Do not! Become overwhelmed with difficult passages or verses you do not understand, trust God and thank Him for the light He has given and He will open those passages later when He sees you are ready

III. We Must Study It

Paul tells us why we must study in 2 Timothy 2:15A

1. So we will not be “ashamed” when asked about the hope in us.
2. So we can “rightly” divide or discern the scriptures.

So you ask “How do we study the Bible?” Well if you asked a hundred teachers they will give you 100 different opinions. The great reformer Marti Luther said this “First I shake the whole tree, the ripest might fall. Then I climb the tree and shake each limb; then each branch, and then each twig” let me break it down for you this way using his analogy.

The Tree = the Book

The Branch= A Paragraph

The Limb= Chapter

The Twig= a Verse

This way you learn the foundational truth of keeping scripture in context. One great preacher said “any scripture taken out of context to build a text is nothing but a pre-text”. You will need a good King James Bible, a good Bible dictionary, concordance these are basic tools that will help you in your study. One last item always be willing to ask a question as the only wrong question is the one not asked

IV. Meditate on it

For this we hear Paul teaching his young preacher Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:15 "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all". Meditating is not sitting in the floor legs crossed chanting rather it is letting the WORD you have been studying speak to you and edify you and the Spirit applying it to your spirit..

Now in Psalm 1:2-3 David gives 3 things that result from meditating on God's word

1. Strong roots (faith)
2. lots of fruit
3. Profitable ministry.

V. Live It

Paul again tells Timothy that putting the first four together we need to let them live in our lives look at 2 Tim. 3:14-17

Verse 15 says "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation

Verse 16 says "profitable for doctrine (teaching) for reproof for correction (of wrong ideas) for instruction in righteousness

Verse 17 says we will be "perfect (mature, complete) thoroughly furnished unto all good (acceptable) works.

It is not enough to just hear, read, study and meditate on the word, it must be lived. Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with a warning to those who hear but do not love His word. In Matt. 7: 24-27 what will be the result when the storm of life comes to those who hear but do not live the word the answer lies in 26&27 their life will fall apart. To those who hear and live the word in 24&25 they will have a solid rock foundation.

To have a firm foundation to become the disciples that Jesus desires us to be we must have a firm grip on the word so we are not like the man who built his house on the sand or the ship on the sea without a rudder. We are in a spiritual war, and one of Satan's primary tactics is to steal the word from our hearts. We need to hear, read, study, meditate and live the word.

LESSON SEVEN

How to Know the Will of God

How can we find God's plan for our lives? How does God reveal His will to us? How does a sinful finite human being come to know the will of a holy infinite God? If there is a decision to make are we to ask God to let the phone ring within the next two minutes to reveal a "yes" or "no"? if we are driving a car while trying to discern God's will can we simply ask Him to let the stoplight turn green just as we get to it if He wants us to do so and so?

In this lesson we are going to consider some scriptures that will help us have guidance toward seeing God's will in our lives. Here are six ways in which God reveals His will to us.

I. Through His Written Word

The Bible is indispensable in finding God's will for our lives. It is always the first place to go in our search. We start in Psalm 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. And also verse 30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. I would like to point out that there is a GENERAL WILL which is the same for all disciples and a SPECIFIC WILL which is to some degree different for each individual. The Lord's general will is clearly and completely revealed in His word. But His specific will is revealed only in the principles in God's word. So for God's general will let's use these 4 verses.

1st 1 Thess. 4:3 "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:" It is clear that to be sanctified or set apart from fornication is the will of God.

2nd 1 Thess. 5: 16-18 "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." To rejoice, pray and be thankful is the will of God for all.

3rd Eph. 5:18b "but be filled with the Spirit;" to be totally under the control of the spirit is God's will.

4th 2 Tim. 2:15a "Study to show thyself approved unto God" to be well versed in the scriptures is the will of God.

We need never worry about finding God's specific will for our lives until we have been obedient in all areas of His general will. God's general will is revealed as a command or an imperative. The specific is always through principles these are guidelines that must be followed with common sense, discretion, and prayer.

Obedying His general will help us to be more attuned to His specific will. Now seldom is this specific will revealed through just one of these following guidelines usually 2 or more. One more thing that is very important God's specific will, for our lives will NEVER contradict His written word.

II Through the Holy Spirit

Since the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit has indwelt every believer. The Holy Spirit has many ministries but one of the most exciting is to lead and guide disciples. Lets look at these 3 reference's to see the Holy Spirit's ministry in relation to God's specific will.

1st John 16:13a "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" we see here that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth.

2nd Romans 8:14 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Holy Spirit will lead us daily because we are the Sons of God!

3rd Gal. 5:16-18 "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." We are in a struggle within however as we allow the Holy Spirit control we do not have to have legal rules to keep us in check!

Now if we are walking (living) in the Spirit allowing Him control of our lives every day then God can and will reveal His will to us through the Holy Spirit.

III Through An Inner Peace

There are two kinds of peace mentioned in the Bible, there is peace with God (Ro. 5:1& Col 1:20) and there is also peace of God (Phil. 4:7). Now lets look at Col. 3: 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Here Paul says the peace of God is to rule (control) in our hearts (soul). This peace can go away when one strays out of God's will! The word "rule" is an athletic word and means to "umpire" when we have a decision to make we should let the peace of God be the umpire and make the call on the decision for us.

Sometimes everything else seems right but there is a loss of inner peace a certain uneasiness as we contemplate the decision. This uneasy feeling is an absence of the peace of Christ, letting us know that to proceed or having proceeded is going to be or was the wrong direction.

IV Through the counsel of Mature Disciples

Seeking a mature friend one who knows the Bible and its spiritual principles can be a tremendous help in finding the will of God for your life. the friend may suggest specific scripture for you to read or may share some insight from their life. Lets look at two Old Testament verses to help us see the value of seeking wise counsel.

1st Proverbs 24:6 "For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety." The more wise counselors the better.

2nd Pro. 27:17 “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” When we impart our wisdom to our friends the stronger we both become. Many times it may be in a passing conversation that God will have something said to reveal His will to us without our mature friend even realizing it.

V. Through Circumstances

We must always remember that no circumstances in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ develop by chance. He is in control of everything including the circumstances which surround each decision a believer must make.

We read the Bible because our Father wrote it to us and we should read our circumstances because He is in control of them. The Bible often refers to circumstances as either an open or closed door. We as disciples need to use caution in looking at circumstances. Sometimes the door may appear to be closed when the Lord is really testing our diligence and faith. Also we should not rush through an open door rather we should use all the rest of our means of determining the Father's will.

VI. Through Personal Desire!

One last thing in seeking God's will is this He is not a celestial kill joy. Finding God's will; will bring great joy and satisfaction into our lives. When we discover His will we can expect our desires will be fulfilled. So when we discover His will in our lives it may well be something that we have wanted to do for years.

As long as we live there will be times when our desires will conflict with the Father's will for us so we must use caution (Jer. 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?. The more we grow in the word of God the more the results in our lives will change look here in Psalm 37:4 to see what David said about this “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

LESSON EIGHT

How to be Holy

In the life of the disciple holiness is not optional it is to be a standard. Why has God called us to live holy (separated) lives lets look at 1 Peter 1:15-16 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. God's virtue is holiness you see God is totally "set apart" or separated from all evil. He is incapable of doing anything other than what is right and holy. He has called each of us to be like Him that is conforming to His character.

There are in the New Testament two types of holiness in reference to one of Jesus disciples.

1st there is "positional" holiness this we have in Christ (Heb. 10:10). This holiness is imparted at the moment of salvation. We use this holiness to approach God in prayer.

2nd there is "practical" holiness that we are to pursue daily as we see in our text.

Positional holiness is instantaneous, practical holiness is progressive and requires a lifetime of effort! The Lord demands we be serious about practical holiness that we be sorry for and confess the sins we commit and that we strive to live a holy life every day.

There is a growing need among the disciples of Jesus and that is a pursuit of practical holiness. Paul in Roman 12:1-2 gives us the greatest appeal for a life of practical holiness found anywhere in the scripture. There are three essentials in these two verses that are ingredients to practical holiness.

I PRESENTATION

ROMANS 12:1A

"I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHERN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, THAT YE PRESENT YOUR BODIES." The word "present" is a technical term and refers to the presenting of sacrifices in the Old Testament as we see here in Lev. 1:5-9. We can see from this passage that the person who presented the sacrifice gave up all claims to the animal. So we can see and learn from this that practical holiness involves a personal and deliberate presentation of our bodies (all parts) body, mind, spirit to God! Practical holiness says "Lord, I'm putting myself on the altar as a sacrifice; I am giving up all claims to myself? So the first step to holiness is presenting each of ourselves as a living sacrifice.

II Separation Romans 12: 1c

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice- Holy"

In the Bible the word "holy" means that which has been set about or separate to God. The word is often translated "sanctify or sanctified". The nature of the word "holy" implies availability and use ability. We are not

set apart to sit idly and do nothing. We are saved to serve; we are to be completely at God's disposal ready for use anytime, anywhere, under any circumstance.

Paul in 1 Thess. 4:3-7 gives some of what we are to be separated from if we are to be holy. 1st we are to abstain from immorality; 2nd let every man honor his wife; 3rd not allow lust to control and; 4th covetousness, and cheating.

Separation is to be a non conformist. Notice what Paul says in Ro. 12:2a "and be not conformed to this world" the world tries to pressure us into fitting into their lifestyles. The world wants us to change our thinking to theirs, to change our values or morality to theirs, to change our values or morality to theirs and wants us to accept the language they use, etc. instead of molding to fit them we should follow the words of Paul in Col 3: 5-12.

To live a life of practical holiness that doesn't conform we must commit what some call "sin suicide". The word "mortify" in verse five means "to kill". The following references show us how to kill the sins that give evidence of someone conforming to the world Romans 6: 12-13; Phil. 4:8

So for practical sanctification is presenting ourselves to God and then separating ourselves from the world's way of thinking, talking and living.

III. Transformation Romans 12:2b

"but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind"

The word "transformed" here is a word we get our word "metamorphosis" which describes the change that takes place from a larva to a cocoon to butterfly. Paul uses it here to describe the process of becoming holy (set apart) in our daily lives.

Just as in a caterpillar's change to a butterfly the change takes place from the inside out. Paul says it is the way for us to be more Christ like the more word on the inside the more Christ begins to show up on the outside. How does this happen "by renewing our mind" the outward acts of holiness are due to the renovating of our mental processes. It is the practical working of a principle found here in Pr. 23:7 "for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he". We must daily feed our minds with the things of God; this will lead to a life of practical holiness.

Someone said "it took God one day to get Israel out of Egypt but it took Him 40 years to get Egypt out of Israel. In just the same way it only takes a moment for God to save us and get us positionally out of sin, but it is a lifetime of growing to get us into a state of practical holiness. Paul in Romans 8:29 gives to us what we are to conform to for practical holiness.

Each of us is to be involved in a process of being transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. As we become like Him we become holy!

LESSON NINE

The Disciples Armor Eph. 6: 11-17

It does not take long for a new believer to learn the hard lesson that the Christian life is not a bed of roses or a playground but instead it is a battleground with a real enemy who is very powerful and deceitful.

Paul uses military terms to illustrate the appropriate uniform for a believer who is out in the world! We need this armor to withstand the Devils “wiles” or crafty arts his schemes. This is the only use of the word “wiles” in the Bible. We should also notice the word “wrestle” Paul uses it to describe the conflict we are in. it is a face to face contact struggle and Paul lists foes who are against us.

There are various ranks among Satan’s army but it’s impossible to distinguish them as there is nothing human to compare them to. Satan is highly organized and we need to stay aware of this and be on guard at all times.

There are 7 pieces of armor that each of us must have on. Each is distinct and vitally necessary if we are to be successful.

I. The Belt 14a

In New Testament times the Roman soldier wore a belt to gird his tunic and to hold his sword and short knife along with various other necessary items. Just before battle the soldier would tuck everything into his belt to ensure his mobility this typifies readiness or preparedness.

Now for us we need to know what the word “truth” refers to look at 2 Tim. 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. And also here in John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Just as that 1st century soldier’s armor was held together with his girdle (belt) our armor is held together with the Word of God. Satan comes at us with lies half truths and twisted scripture and the only thing to combat it is the truth of God!

II. The Breastplate of Righteousness 14b

The “breastplate” was made of metal plates that covered the body from the neck to the waist on the front. This provided protection to the vital organs, such as the heart and lungs.

When a believer is clothed in Christ righteousness he is armored. Words cannot defend against accusations but a righteous life can; look at the following references 1 Cor. 15:34a; Col. 3:8-10; 1 Thess. 5: 22.

Satan is always looking for even the least crack in the breastplate as that is all he needs to exploit us. One of his names is the accuser and that’s what he does the only fortress against this is righteousness.

III. The Shoes 6:15

The Roman soldiers wore sandals with nails in the soles at an angle to give him better stability in battle. Not only could he hold his ground he could make a sudden move without falling or even slipping.

The Christian will be well able to hold his ground with “preparation” which means readiness of mind so basically we must always be ready before the battle ever begins. The phrase “gospel of peace” has two things about it one it is what we are to offer to others the gospel of Jesus which brings peace with God. Second it lets us know that we are at peace with Him and He is on our side. There is one other item we should be ready with look at 1 Peter 3:15b “and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” What greater loss could you have than to miss the opportunity to win someone to Christ. What a victory for Satan.

IV. The Shield of Faith 6:16

The Roman shield was usually about 4’ by 2’ made of wood and covered with leather that was treated so that flaming arrows would go out if struck by one.

These fiery darts or arrows are symbols of the temptations which Satan throws at us. Arrows such as lust, pride, and greed read 1 John 2:16b. Satan tries to bombard us with these to solicit our evil responses. Our only defense is the “shield of faith”.

This shield of faith means that we have all our trust in God. Satan tries to get each of us to distrust God and go Satan’s way. We have been hit by one of those darts every time we sin.

Here are 3 references which show the result of our faith in God Prov. 30:5; Ps. 18:30; 1 John 5:4 our faith in God is our shield every time we lower it we get hit!

V. The Helmet of Salvation 17a

The Roman helmet was worn of course to protect the brain as the mind is the center of our thought processes. To receive a head wound is a serious matter because the rest of the body depends so heavily upon the proper function of the mind.

The “helmet of salvation” keeps our thinking straight in the midst of a very confused world. Before salvation we were like the world but since salvation affects our minds to what should be happening to us we will just look at what Paul said in Romans 12:2b “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Salvation is more than a deliverance from evil it is a prolonged process that involves the renewing of our minds.

VI. The Sword of the Spirit, The Word 17b

It is clear that all the other pieces mentioned are defensive in nature they are designed to protect the wearer. This one is most definitely offensive. On the belt of a Roman soldier he wore a short razor sharp 2

edged sword designed for close in fighting, so deadly was it that it overwhelmed the civilized world.

When we considered the Word of God as truth to defend ourselves from the lies of Satan and to hold everything else in place it was purely defensive.

The use of the Word of God changes when it is offensive look at these references to see this Acts 2:37-41 and 2 Tim. 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. Every time we preach or teach the Bible to uplift, exhort, comfort, give guidance or convict we are launching a front line attack on the work of Satan with the sharp “sword”.

VII. Prayer 6:18

Paul says that we should pray “with all prayer” which includes confession, adoration, intercession, petition, etc. as we have already covered. Paul also says here to keep on praying for other believers who are in the battle. Prayer is also an offensive weapon that can make havoc of the “wiles” of the devil. When was the last time you prayed earnestly for a fellow believer who was in a fierce spiritual battle?

LESSON TEN

The Fruit of the Spirit

In Galatians 5, Paul for the Galatians Church and for us as well describes the conflict between the Spirit and the flesh then goes on to draw a sharp contrast between the two lifestyles. To make the contrast as vivid as possible Paul lists by name 17 works of the flesh in verses 18-21 and these in three basic categories.

1. Sexual- Adultery illicit sex inside marriage; Fornication illicit sex outside of marriage; Uncleaness impure actions and behavior Lasciviousness= wanton type of behavior.
2. Spiritual- Idolatry anything before God; Witchcraft use of drugs to altar ones mind to be able to cast spells; Heresies- religious lies
3. Social -Variance lawsuits; Emulations using others for gain; Hatred self explanatory; Strife rivalries; Seditions- undermining someone in authority; Envy- covetousness; Murders- taking innocent life; Drunkenness- imbibing to much alcohol so as to be out of control; Revellings- orgy like parties.

Paul then gives an ominous warning to any and all who practice such things (21b).

Now suppose a Christian commits one of these listed sins. The key is in the little word “do” this little word has a big meaning. The word means “to practice” or “to habitually do something”. Christians do sin but the Holy Spirit restrains or holds us back from habitual sinning. Now when a Christian does commit a sin they are convicted by the Holy Spirit to confess it and forsake it 1 John 1:9 and 2:1

Now that Paul has brought out the works of the flesh he then proceeds with his contrasts starting with the word “but” in verse 22 notice it does not say fruits plural but “fruit” singular. Just as a grape grows in clusters and oranges have segments the fruit of the Holy Spirit is a cluster of fruit. These nine characteristics combine to make one fruit that of a spiritual disciple.

You will have all of these or none of these as they are vitally linked to each other. They may not be as fully developed in some people as they are in others but they will be there. Just as fruit needs water to fully develop so to the more of the word the more developed the spiritual fruit. Just as with the fruit of the flesh these also are in 3 groups. 1. to ourselves 2. To others 3. To God. Let’s look at each beginning with the 1st group to ourselves.

1. Love

In the English language we have this one word to describe our feelings for our spouse’s, pets, sports, food, etc. one word for several types of expressed emotion. In the New Testament there are 3 basic words used to describe different types of love. There is the word used for sensual love it is where we get the English word Erotica. The second word they used

was to describe love for brothers or family we get our word Philanthropy and Philadelphia from it.

The word Paul uses here is for the highest love possible a love that loved the unlovely and unlovable and would willingly sacrifice itself for the object of that love even toward its enemies. It is this love that was displayed at Calvary.

This love is not a natural love we would be willing to make some sacrifices for families that would be natural but not toward enemies only the Holy Spirit can produce a love that will do this for us. This love must come first as the other 8 are an outgrowth from it.

2. Joy

Joy is not necessarily the same as happiness. Happiness has to do with circumstances from the outside joy on the other hand springs from deep down inside it is not effected by circumstances. It is the result of a permanent day by day relationship.

What is the source of this joy? For the answer we need to look at Luke 2:8-11 what must we do if our joy is to be full Jesus tells us in John 15: 9-11. How does joy become a reality in the life of a disciple look at Romans 15:13?

3. Peace

There are of course 2 kinds of peace in the New Testament. First there is peace with God this comes through the blood of Christ at salvation. Second there is the peace of God which is that peace of mind based on our relationship to God. This peace has nothing to do with circumstances. It is an inward peace that no matter what we have going on in our lives we can have confidence in God (Is. 26:3 and Ph. 4: 6-7) these two verse tell us how to cultivate this characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit. These first three have dealt with our inward selves. The next three are fruit dealing with others.

4. Longsuffering:

This is Patience while enduring provocation. If we are easily upset when something goes wrong or if when we are wronged we have thought of revenge we are not being Longsuffering. Longsuffering is a loving tolerance of others no matter how they treat us. How do we cultivate or grow into longsuffering Rom.5:5; James 1:2-4 will give us some help. If we allow Him the Holy Spirit will use those frustrations and tribulations to produce longsuffering.

5. Gentleness:

This is that which keeps us from being unkind and harsh to others. To be "gentile" is to be equitable and fair, not insisting on the letter of the law but judging objectively, reasonably looking at the facts of a situation.

Gentleness avoids causing pain when possible; when one is with someone who is having a difficult time gentleness is trying to put them at ease.

6. Goodness

This is Love in Action. Goodness not only wants the best welfare of others but takes action to see that the welfare is realized. This is more than being righteous. Rom. 5:7 shows a marked difference between the two. For example “a righteous person could evict a widow for not paying rent and would be legally right. You see righteousness keeps the letter of the law; goodness goes beyond and would pay the bill for her. Romans 5:7-8 shows us God’s goodness to us; also in Gal.6:10 we see that goodness goes beyond the law “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

So we have seen 3 to ourselves 3 to others and the last 3 are toward God!

7. Faith:

This emphasizes our relationship to God and means a “firm persuasion” that is its general meaning here though “faith” is the idea of “faithfulness, fidelity or trustworthiness” as a fruit of the indwelling Spirit. We can read Matt. 25:21 and Luke 19: 17 and gain some instruction in growing in faithfulness.

8. Meekness:

This is not weakness or a Mr. Milquetoast attitude it is however strength under control. It is a humility that will not allow pride to control one’s life. It is to have the mind of Christ to be under Jesus control.

The meek person does not throw his weight around it is the proper use of authority and power. Christ is our perfect example of being meek look at Him in Phil. 2:5-8

9. Temperance:

This is not as many would suppose an abstinence from alcohol. It is however a reference to “self control”. It is that virtue found in the life of one who masters desire, passion, especially those of sensual appetites. Jesus in the garden is a good example of temperance Matt. 26:39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

The “fruit of the Spirit” is singular. It is like the orange. Just like each segment makes the whole orange so to all of these virtues make the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This passage ends with “against such there is no law”.

LESSON ELEVEN

How to have a Disciple's Tongue

How many give much thought to our tongues relationship to our growing as disciples? Most of us give little thought to the small organ that allows us to taste, chew, swallow, and talk. However according to James 3: 2-8 we can see that the tongue has great power and by having this power it plays an important role in our lives as disciples of Jesus.

For example the tongue can make or break a marriage, it can make our homes paradise or a desert. It can build or kill a church; it can draw people to Christ or drive them away. There are 3 things every believer needs to know about a disciples tongue.

I. The Importance of having a Disciples Tongue

The importance of this cannot be overstated why? Well the Bible gives at least two reasons. The first is in James 1:26 "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." this verse tells us that discretion in speech is better than fluency, you can also read James 3: 2-3 and also Psalm 19:1 to see that only God can enable us to do this.

The second is found in Matt. 12:36 "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment". Jesus here speaking to the Pharisees informs them that words are the index of the heart however idle they may seem will be taken account of in estimating character whether good or bad! So it seems that the Lord watches our words closely.

II. The Evidence of not having a Disciples Tongue

If we do not have a disciples tongue the sins of the tongue will be evident in ones life. The best list of these is found in Col. 3: 8-9. Paul starts by saying "put off all these" in verse 8a. Now "put off" has behind it the idea of taking off dirty clothes. So Paul is saying that just as a person takes off his dirty clothes at the end of the day so one should after salvation take off and discard the old ways in which they used the tongue. Just as we would not put clean clothes on overtop of dirty clothes we should not use our old tongue and also a disciples tongue.

Most believers have no problem with drunkenness or stealing or adultery but we are all capable of and may be guilty of at one time or other of one of the following. What's worse a lot of these are done in the church house.

1st we have "anger" this word means a deep smoldering, a slow burning anger that refuses to be purified. This anger causes one to say something such as this "that person just burns me up". This is one that starts with an attitude as we see in Matt. 12: 34-35

2nd we have “wrath” this is a sudden outburst, this is anger in action, the tongue let loose. Most believers would never show wrath by hitting or hurting someone but will think little of lashing out through harsh words that can do even more harm.

3rd we have “malice” it is an attitude of “evil intent”. One with malice in the heart toward another is saddened when the other one succeeds at anything and will say things to minimize the success or are critical of the method or motives.

4th we have “blasphemy” this word is different than that used in reference to God. Here it is defined as “slander” this is in itself a serious matter look at James 3:9. Men still resembles in our humanity the image of the Son of God and therefore to slander another man we are in essence slandering God!

5th we have “filthy communication” or obscene language in Eph. 4:29 it is called “corrupt” (rotten) language. For some reason our generation and even more our children think it manly or mature to use coarse humor or vulgar talk. As a disciple of Jesus Christ this type of language should not be heard coming out of us. Jesus gives us in Luke 6: 45 what filthy language is a symptom of.

6th and last we have “lying” this is a deliberate untruth. Look at Pro. 6:16-17 and Pro. 12:22. A disciple must put these 6 off (number of man) to have a disciples tongue.

III. How to have a disciples Tongue

One’s own tongue can be a great asset or a great liability. It can make or break us as a disciple. Our success at being a mature disciple of Jesus that is being more like him depends on harnessing the tongue James 3: 7-8.

Not only is the tongue “untamed” it is “untamable” that means that as long as you live and I live we will never completely gain control so we must be on constant guard.

James 3:2 gives the importance of controlling our tongues “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” that is if we can control the tongue we can control or subdue the whole body. The tongue according to the Lord is the hardest to subject if and when one can master it. They will find it much easier to control the- feet, hands, thoughts and desires etc.

The control of this little member begins on the inside with our thinking. You see words are an expression of our thinking. So to change your words you must change your thinking. Paul gives us some of the things to think on to change our thinking process in Phil. 4:8

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Truth- sincere in words | 5. Lovely- lovable |
| 2. Honest- dignified, seemly | 6. Good report-what is not face to face |
| 3. Just- (right) toward others | 7. Virtue- Piety (God) Morality (man) |

4. Pure – Chaste

worthy of praise by others. We should have a continued regard toward these and as we do our speech will change from the former to what is proper for a disciple. James makes clear that how we use our tongue speaks volumes of our spiritual maturity. We must practice some fundamentals as found in the following verses Ps.39:1; Col. 4:6; Eph. 4:15; James 1:9.

8. Praise- men should live so as to be

LESSON TWELVE

What is the Church?

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is a personal individual relationship with Him. It also involves a relationship with other believers. According to the New Testament every follower of Jesus Christ should be a functional part of a local church. Today there are so many buildings and organizations in Christianity that the true church is lost in the maze.

The Bible uses the word “church” in two applications these must be defined and understood. First the word church is used to encompass all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the “one body” spoken of by Paul in 1 Cor. 12:13-14 where he said “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” also in Eph. 4: 4-6 “There is one body, one Spirit”.

Second the word “Church” is applied to a local assembly of believers the “local church”. The Bible teaches the local church using such terms as “the church at Corinth; at Ephesus; etc. the names were used to identify groups in different places. We will look first at “the one body” and later at “the local church”.

I. The Church- The Body of Christ

First we take up the “meaning of the word Church” the church is not an organization when you hear someone say “the organized church” they are referring to a man made group.

The church is made up of people who have been born anew by accepting Christ as personal Saviour. They become a part of the body of Christ which is alive.

Second we have the word “Church” for 300 years after Christ what our Lord created was called the “called out ones”. When Emperor Constantine of Rome after his so called conversion in 313 ad legalized Christianity began to build large temples they were then called “a lordly house”, the word in Latin is “Kuriakos” from this it went to “Kirkus” then to “kirk” (Scottish) to the English “Church”.

Next is the nature of the Church, first it is a called out assembly. The word church was used in Christ’s day for a group of people convened for deliberating. Where Christians are concerned we are called out of the world into fellowship with Christ and other believers.

The children of Israel were a called out company from Egypt but they were not a part of the body of Christ. Look at Acts 7: 38 the word “church” here refers to the fact that the nation of Israel was called out of Egypt as an assembly. Secondly the church is a divine institution the church was a mystery hidden in the heart of God until He revealed the meaning. Christ is the Head of the church; God exalted Him to that position as we see in Eph. 1: 22-23 “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” The true church is everyone that is under Him today. There are many organizations today called church denominations that are not listening to Jesus. He is the head and the whole body is to be under a single mind that is Jesus. Just as our bodies obey our brains so is the whole of the church to obey Christ Jesus. Christ mentioned the church first in Matthew 16:18 when He revealed this to Peter and the others it was still in the future. Notice when you read this verse the wording “I will build my church”. Jesus did not say continue to build but I will build. Jesus was telling Peter that he was much too small a stone to make a foundation out of but Jesus Himself was a huge stone the size of a mountain that would fill the earth, one cut out without hands as recorded in Daniel 2:34 “Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.”

The church took its outward form at Pentecost. The mystery was revealed as seen in Eph. 3:9-10. Our mission as the church at large is to continue revealing Jesus to a lost world.

The third thing is the Foundation; many hours have been taken up discussing Matthew 16:13-18 and just what Jesus meant in this passage. One needs only compare it to 1 Cor. 3: 9-10 and 11 these verses makes it quite clear that Jesus is the foundation and every thing about the church is based on Jesus. Our salvation, obedience, life itself is on Jesus the rock.

Look also at 1 Cor. 10:4 the Rock there is the same as in Matt. 16:18 Christ was the Rock in the Old Testament and He is the Rock the foundation of the church. He is the Rock in Exodus 17:6 this is a type of Christ in character and provision that He would bring we see this when we compare it to John 4:14.

We have the testimony of Peter himself in 1 Peter 2:3-4 there is only one living stone that will make a solid foundation Jesus gave a parable about building on it also (Matt. 21:42,44) these two verses speak of Israel rejecting it. If we fall on this stone for mercy we will be broken or one can reject this stone and be crushed by it at the white throne judgment. Peter calls Jesus a living stone the word “stone” here means a large single stone.

Peter never claimed to be the rock on which the church is to be built. He was the first to admit he was just a little stone in what would be a great building 1 Pet. 2:5

The fourth thing we see is that the Church is the body of Christ. This body is an organic UNITY: 1 Cor. 12:12, 20,27. Each body has 209 bones, 2 arms, 2 legs, 2 lungs, 2 kidneys, etc. So is the church it is an organism composed of many organisms read here 1 Cor. 12:13 “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.”

Everyone who accepts Jesus as Saviour is placed in the body by the Holy

Spirit just as every part of our body needs each other to function properly so does the church at large.

Notice also in 1 Cor. 12:18 that repentance is son making and adoption is son placing. Since we are His body He Himself places each of us in His body as He sees fit. Look at 1 Cor. 12:27 here we see we are special members just like toes or fingers or nails each of us is a particular part and each is necessary to the whole. We must realize that God sets us and not ourselves.

Jesus is the authority in the church we can see this in Col. 1: 17-18 we see here that He is before all things and that all fullness is in Christ. He holds the whole of creation together. He holds all of His body, His church together. He is the Head giving direction to the body to move in the world giving out the gospel.

Jesus is the cornerstone, in Eph. 2:19 the church is the “household of God” we that gentile and Jew alike are all saved by Jesus. We are all saints, members of one large house. We see in Ph. 3:20 “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven. We need also notice that a “stranger” was a foreigner in a state. And a foreigner was a guest in a private home. In Eph. 2:20 Jesus is not only the bedrock but the chief cornerstone. The Apostles and 1st century believers laid down the first course of living stones. Notice also in Eph. 2:21 here the church is likened to a temple still under construction hidden behind scaffolding. We also can see in 2 Cor. 3:16 that each of us individually is a temple of the Holy Spirit and corporately everyone who belongs to Christ makes up the temple.

The fifth thing is that the Church is the Bride of Christ. The bride is purchased by Christ look at Eph. 5:25. Jesus loved us to the point of dying for us. In doing so he bought us out of the slavery of sin. The marriage brings forth fruit unto God. In Romans 7:14 we can see that we are now in a living relationship with Christ the last Adam.

The bride is cleansed by the washing of the word; Jesus keeps the bride (church) clean by the word as Paul tells us in Eph. 5:26 this is what Jesus is doing today for all those who truly belong to Him. Jesus is making His bride more like Himself as we see in these two references first John 15:3 “Now you are clean through the word” second James 1:27 “keep yourselves unspotted from the world” spots- refer to defilement from outside and wrinkles to defilement from inside.

Lastly the destiny of the church at large, Jesus has a destiny for the church He redeemed the one He loved, nourishes, cherishes. Paul gives us this destiny in Eph. 5:27 this is the future of the true church. That is those who are truly born again out of every local church. This will be the church without scaffolding shown in all it’s glory. Believers are members of His body, His flesh, and His bones as seen in Eph. 5:30. The church is part of the last invitation given in the Bible in Rev. 22:17

LESSON THIRTEEN

The Disciple and their relationship to the local Congregation

Introduction: As surely as one is born again into the body of Christ at large. There will be a yearning for and a seeking out for the fellowship of other members of the body of Christ. This is where the local assembly is to become a part of our life. Even though there are no perfect local churches (there will always be tares) the Christian should identify him or herself with a Bible believing church. A Church where you can study the word and grow in knowledge and wisdom of the Lord and exercise your gift toward others. If you are saved you should let your testimony be a part of a larger fellowship. The local assembly is the physical body by which the body of Christ the church is manifested.

I. The Church the Local Congregation

We start this lesson with a quote from the book of Acts “all that Jesus began both to do and teach”. This is the Acts of the Lord Jesus Christ; in our Bibles the fifth book of the New Testament is titled “the Acts of the Apostles” some just say “The Acts”. This name includes the acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. Even more specifically, it presents “the acts of the Lord Jesus Christ” in directing His work on Earth from heaven. Look at Acts 1:1 and Luke 1:1, Luke is instructing Theophilus (lover of God) a friend and fellow believer on the basics of Christianity. Luke presented Jesus as the Son of man in his gospel and “Acts” is a continuing of what the Lord is doing.

In Acts chapter two after Peter preached from the roof top of the house they were staying in some 3,000 souls were added. To what you ask? To the local Church at Jerusalem, the Lord did the adding and He is still adding even today (2:47). Souls can be added to a local church 7 days a week not just on Sunday. The early church was always out showing Christ. The book of Acts has no ending as do the other letters because the work is not yet finished it continues through the local church today.

II. All that Jesus began

This will continue until the “fullness of the Gentiles be come in” or finished as seen in Romans 11:25. Look also at John 14:12 for one of the amazing things the Lord said “Verily, verily, I say unto you, 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”. The Apostles touched more lives than Jesus and even today we are reaching more people than ever before. Preaching salvation and seeing souls saved is a greater miracle in a person’s life than just a physical healing. Even a healed body will eventually die. However a soul saved will live forever.

This is a greater work! Notice that the second time “works” appears it is in italics which means it was added later by the translators for clarity.

The Lord even gave an outline to the church for His work. In the book of Acts we can see this in chapter one verse 8 “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”. Everything He does is orderly and properly done. Luke follow this outline as he writes this book as follows first in Jerusalem Acts 2:1, then out to Judea and Samaria in Acts 8:1,5 and then to the uttermost in Acts 8: 26; 10:1 to Ethiopia and on to Rome.

III. The promise of the Holy Spirit

Jesus even gave a promise unlike any of the others; He gave them the promise of the Holy Spirit. Out of more than 3,000 promises there is only one that is “the promise of the Father.”

Jesus spoke of it in Acts 4:1 also in Luke 24:49 they were to be patient and wait for the Holy Spirits power before beginning their ministry. In John 14:26 we are promised that the Holy Spirit will remind us of all Jesus said He is the ultimate disciple maker. He can only teach us what we want to learn. In John 14:16 we see the word “another” this word means *one of the same kind* we also have the word “comforter” which means one of strength standing alongside.

The Holy Spirit came in power. The group of disciples was told to wait for the “promise” we are also told “ye shall (future tense) receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses” (someone who sincerely tells what they know) to what they had seen and heard. This is used 29 times in “Acts”

The Holy Spirit came in the name of Jesus as stated in John 14:26. The 12 disciples that Jesus trained minus Judas Iscariot would be the foundation of the church. The church was born on the day of Pentecost going from about 120 waiting souls to 3,120 in one day.

IV. The mandate of the Lord to the Church

The commission of Jesus to the church is found in Matthew 28:19-20 we are told to go into all the world and - make disciples or student followers that is teach all – baptizing them – this is a formal identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus – teaching them to observe all things- the whole counsel of God, rightly dividing the Word.

Jesus ascended with this great promise. In Matthew He said “Lo, I am with you always”, in Luke He said “Repentance and Remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations” Luke 24: 46-51

Was this for the local Church? Yes when Jesus ascended there was no New Testament, no writings all they had was a promise. The group of 120 was an assembly a church. They would be called this from Pentecost on.

V. The Local Church is a Fellowship

The center of this fellowship is Jesus Christ. When reading through the book of Acts we find that the churches were exciting fellowships with Jesus as the head and center. In 1 Cor. 1:9 we are said to be in a "fellowship" (partnership) not just with ourselves but with Christ. All are His He is ours. It is a love that accommodates our weaknesses and gives us strengths. The conclusion to the thought begun here in verse 9 is found in 1 Cor. 15:58.

V. The local church is a fellowship of believers

The New Testament does not mention any Christians who were not attached to the church in their midst. In fact one test of discipleship was fellowship as seen in 1 John 3:14 and 16. It is a fellowship that is based not on our selves but on our mutual love for Jesus (Eph. 4:3). We are to be at peace with the fellowship and esteem the leaders placed by God in the church according to 1 Thess. 5:12, 13. We are to walk together in the light of Jesus Christ according to 1 John 1:7.

The fellowship of a church sustains believers. We can see this by looking at the following list of verses.

1. we are to comfort one another 1 Thess. 4:18
2. we are to love one another 1 Peter 1:22
3. the church is to teach the word of God Col. 3:16

The fellowship of the church is vital for spiritual growth. The fellowship of a church is the visible manifestation of the unseen Christ. We are living stones according to 1 Peter 3:15. a local church should have such a testimony for Christ that the sight of the building is a rebuke to their sin.

The local church in the New Testament is referenced about 100 times. It is always to a local congregation. In Acts 2:31-42 Peter preaches and the 3,000 become part of the Church at Jerusalem. In verse 42 we have a clue as to why this church grew so fast it is one word "discipleship".

Down in Acts 2:47 it says "the Lord added to the Church daily" this was possible because of discipleship and a close walk with Christ. Look now in Acts 6:7 we see the phrase "the number multiplied greatly" why because they kept spreading the word of God concerning Jesus! Even some of the priests were being saved. In Acts 8:1,3 "There was great persecution" as they grew they became complacent ready to stay as they were so God sends persecution on them and they go where they were supposed to go Acts 1:8.

Paul once he was converted became a "chosen vessel" to the gentiles. Here are some references to Paul and the local churches.

Acts 9:31 the Churches did not fear Paul any longer

Acts 11:19-26 Paul at Antioch in Syria

Acts 14:23 Paul ordained leaders in the Churches of Acts 13&14 after starting a local assembly Paul would train and ordain men to take over.

Acts 14:27 Paul back at Antioch, Syria makes his 1st missionary conference.

Acts 15:41 Paul went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the Churches

Acts 16:11-40 Paul wanted to go in another direction but the Lord only allowed him to go to Macedonia

Acts 17: 1-4 The church at Thessalonica is formed also the one at Berea these people were really into the word!

Acts 18:2 the Church at Corinth this one was founded by a couple of Roman Jews Priscilla and Aquilla.

Acts 19:8-10 The Church at Ephesus started in a school room

Acts 20:7, 17 The church of Troas they stayed long hours to hear the word.

Acts 28: 17-31 The gospel in Rome this church founded in by a man in chains between 2 soldiers.

The Book has no end and we will add our course of living stone just as our forefathers before us did!

Lesson Fourteen

The Disciple and Apostasy a warning

Intro: As Jesus disciples we are His representatives on earth in effect we are ambassadors as Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 5: 20 "We are ambassadors for Christ". Satan has other plans, from the beginning he has desired to hinder the witness of the body of Christ. Here are a few verses to help us see this.

1st Matt. 15:9 "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men."

2nd 1 Tim. 4:1 "that in the latter times (of the church) some shall depart (stand away from; this is were our word Apostasy comes to us and that by way of transliteration of Aphistemi) from the faith (that body of truth delivered by the apostles under the power of the Holy Spirit), giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils". There are also these references Eph. 4:14 and Heb. 13:9.

Satan contaminates believers with half truths and mixed up doctrine as stated by the apostle Paul in 2 Tim. 4:3 "but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears" (teachers who will tickle or say pleasing things to them) also Phil. 3: 17-19 and Jude 4. Satan also contaminates believers with unholy people as in 2 Cor. 11: 13- 15.

I Definition of Apostasy

In order to understand why we need to beware of apostasy we need to define just what this word is all about. Here are four defining statements.

1st Apostasy denotes the removal from or forsaking of a person or a system of thought from something once held as seen in Acts 21: 18-21.

2nd The departure is willful. This action is displayed in 1 Tim: 4:1-3

3rd The New Testament uses the verb form meaning "personal withdrawal" or "withdrawal from the faith" as taught by Jesus in Luke 8: 13 "fall away; but departed; apostasy"; Heb. 3:12 has the word "departing" in it these "professed" to believe;

4th According to Bishop Unger Apostasy is "the act of a professed Christian who knowingly and deliberating rejects truth regarding the deity of Christ 1 John 4:1-3 and redemption through His atoning sacrifice Phil. 3:18; and 2 Pet. 2:1.

Heresy is not Apostasy (Titus 3: 8-11). Heresy is a selfish choice resulting in petty divisions in the church. Heresy is more carnal trouble making than theological ever.

Apostasy must also be distinguished from ignorance Acts 19: 1-9 Paul's solution here in this passage was to separate the disciple's.

II The Character of Apostates

First they go against the revealed truth: faith in Christ 2 Tim. 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. These do not believe it will work. Apostasy started giving at the end of the 19th century with the introduction of the Revised Standard Version and two men named Westcott and Hort

Second we need to see who motivates these apostates? The answer is in 1 Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Third we need to see how apostates are described for this we need only look here in 1 Tim. 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; these apostates declare that they do not lie! However close examination of their lives and work often proves quite the opposite.

In 2 Peter 2:10 there are five items of description for an apostate.

1. Walk after the flesh
2. Lust of uncleanness
3. Despise governments'
4. Presumptuous or self willed
5. Not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries

Now look how they are described in verses 12-14 of the same chapter.

"But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;"

what do these apostates promise? The answer is in verse 19 "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." Jude gives us some more on this in verse 8 of his book "likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh despise dominion (authority), and speak evil of dignitaries". In Jude 12 and in 2 Tim. 3:5 apostates are seen to have one thing in common they act like they are true believers but they are just empty clouds "clouds they are without water, carried about of winds".

Dr. Pickering wrote this about apostates "Satan's doctrines are spread by Satan's ministers as seen in 2 Cor. 11: 13-15 "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Unsaved people who have no spiritual discernment hail these men as great religious leaders while the preachers of truth, God's ministers are despised and viewed as being uncooperative, divisive, and unloving.

Satan's preachers accommodate themselves to the tastes of unregenerate hearers and are thus much more popular.

III. Progression of Apostasy

One may ask can the course of apostasy be checked now that it has seemingly become firmly entrenched. Let's see what Paul says in Eph. 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. We can see from this verse and these in the Old Testament such as Numbers 11:1 "And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp". and chapter 12:9 lets read also Joshua 7:1 "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel". We can see from these that apostasy is a serious matter with God. His anger burns brightly towards those who depart from the faith, here are two more references Romans 1:18; Psalm 7:11.

Apostasy is discoverable there is no need to be baffled by what apostasy is look at Col. 2:8 "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." and 1 Tim. 6:20-21. Apostasy is pervasive and progressive. It is pictured in the leaven of the Pharisees in that it produced religious externalism as Jesus shows us in Matt. 16: 6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees and verse 12 Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. The leaven of the Sadducees exhibited a spirit of skepticism toward the spiritual as seen in Matt. 22: 23, 29.

The leaven of the Herodians manifested a spirit of worldly compromise Matt. 22: 18-21. Leavening portrays false doctrine in that it works its way quickly through the mass "till the whole is leavened" Matt. 13:33.

In 2 Tim. 2: 16-17 Paul depicts false doctrine as gangrene that must be shunned "And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus". Apostasy is awaiting judgment as Peter tells us in 2 Peter 2: 17, 21 and Jude 11-15. Looking at these two passages we see no hope that apostasy will be stopped. History has no example of a group or denomination being rescued to Biblical rightness after being captured by apostates.

As this age moves to its conclusion, apostasy will deepen as Paul tells Timothy in 2 Tim. 3:1 "perilous times shall come" and again in verse 13 "evil men and seducers will grow worse and worse". What should a disciple of God do? Let's look at several verses and see what we are commanded to do.

1. Ro. 16:17 Paul says to "mark" (expose) them which cause divisions and offenses
2. 2 Cor. 6:14-18 "we are to separate ourselves from those who are already apostate.
3. Gal. 1: 8-9 to let any who change the gospel be accursed
4. 2 John 7-11 anyone who does not teach or preach the doctrine of Christ is to be shunned or we will be equally guilty.

IV. When does a Church Body become Apostate

First a church body does not become apostate when it removes the gospel from their creed or confession. No it happened long before. The believers within the group still have the freedom to leave or stay. However the apostates in their midst do two things.

1st they lie about the word 2 Pet. 2:3

2nd they twist meanings of words (Eisigesis). So they sound like the truth to the untrained ear.

A body is apostate at the time when men and women in its leadership deny the basic tenants of the Christian faith. Official publications promote views contrary to orthodox Christianity. Official schools of the body employ faculty members and or utilize visiting speakers who teach views that are at variance with the truths of God's words.

No effort is made by the leadership of the group or the majority of its constituency to expunge the offending parties.

We have come to the conclusion of this study of the basics of being a disciple of Jesus I hope that those who have read these words have gained some wisdom for their walk with Jesus and their service to their fellow man.