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**"Better Discipleship"**

# THE CHRISTIAN WALK

MAGAZINE



SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS TO FAN THE INNER-FLAME OF LIVING FOR CHRIST

# CONTENTS

*"...be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."*

-Colossians 1:9-10



## DISCLAIMER

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- Editorial .....3
- Evangelism: "One on One" .....4-6
- Are You A Tree Or A Post? .....7-8
- The Necessity of Bible Reading & Study .....9-11
- Prayer Passcode .....12-16
- Taking Care How We Worship .....17-19
- Increase Your Faith .....20-21
- Proving Ourselves Disciples by Our Love .....22-26
- The Disciple's Response To God's Holiness .....27-31
- Free Lesson Outline .....32

# EDITORIAL PAGE



For those who genuinely seek to live for Jesus, there abides an inner hunger to serve in His kingdom. The business of the Lord's kingdom isn't limited to when a given number of His Saints assemble for organized worship services. On the contrary, the business of the Lord's kingdom is universally located (**Lk** 11:20; 17:20-21) and encompasses all aspects of the human experience.

Hence the zeal of Jesus's followers boils wherever and whenever opportunities to labor for the sake of the kingdom present themselves. This helps us to have a broader understanding of **Matthew** 6:33.

Imagine a congregation with the majority of its members possessing this kind of hunger! Imagine the practical effects of such genuine hunger for kingdom-service--upon the congregation, and the community (**Acts** 2:42-47; 4:23-31).

So, while this issue of *The Christian Walk Magazine* focuses on "Better Discipleship," this theme is meant to inspire us to continue building on our relationship and service to the King of Kings. What can I do better? The answer to this question may rest within the goal of first being better. The deeper and better my discipleship develops, the better I can be at certain aspects of kingdom-service (**2 Pet** 1:3-11).

Let all of us who follow Jesus and live the Christian walk, strive to be better disciples. Not just in the assembly alone, but wherever we find ourselves with the kingdom's message, ready to proclaim and demonstrate it.

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**KEY SCRIPTURE: ACTS 8 1-4.**

## **PERSONAL EVANGELISM: "ONE ON ONE"**

"I will study the Word more and the more I study, the more I will know and have the desire and confidence to tell others. What to say is limited only by my lack of study and conviction and zeal for the Lord."

**T**he most effective and productive teaching has always been done by the individual. Public teaching has its place, but it cannot compare to the results of sincere and dedicated efforts of one-on-one evangelism. We lament the lack of growth in the church today; usually, the blame is laid at the feet of the preacher or the elders. We must have strong preaching by strong preachers and strong and firm guidance by strong elders—but that will never take the place of strong personal workers.

The persecution of the church in Jerusalem resulted in men grounded in the truth going everywhere teaching the gospel. We usually equate "problems" and members scattering with losing ground, and most of the time this is what happens. Why? A lack of conviction and dedication by individual members! The preacher is not the most important member of any congregation. Every member has his own responsibility to discharge, and personal evangelism is the answer.

Lack of personal evangelism is often excused with "I would do more if I just knew how." What is the proper way? "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Did you notice the word "work" raising its ugly head? There is no substitute. It is a matter of me doing my work and you doing yours. We often have training classes and make preparations to go--and then never go. It is not easy to get started, but start we must. Do you have trouble **(Continued on page 5)**



**(Cont. from page 4)**

talking to those you really love about their physical well-being? Christianity is like a smile—you can't keep it without sharing it.

Moses used the same excuses as we do today to try to get out of his duty. "Who am I that I should go? What shall I say to them? They will not believe me or listen

to my voice. I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. Send someone else." (See Exodus 3, 4). Just as God's anger was kindled against Moses, it will be against us if we do not try to teach someone the gospel.



**“Who am I?”** I am one who was lost in sin, but now am free. I am one who had lost the peace of mind that is sought by all. I am one so thankful for God's love and mercy and sacrifice of His own Son. I am one who has a hope of eternity in heaven and a burning desire to share that hope with everyone that will listen if I am a Christian.

**“What shall I say?”** I will tell others about the Lord and Savior of a lost and dying world. I will tell others of His love for man and His death, burial, and resurrection. I will tell about the Word that guides us in all truth. I will share God's concern for man and His desire that all will come to repentance. I will tell how faith, repentance, confession, and baptism saved three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost and how they do the same for us today. I will study the Word more and the more I study, the more I will know and have the desire and confidence to tell others. What to say is limited only by my lack of study and conviction and zeal for the Lord.

**“They won't listen.”** We often are guilty of pre-judging others. Would you have thought that Saul of Tarsus was a good prospect for the gospel? We confuse our responsibilities. It is not my job to convert the world, it is only mine to tell the story of conversion. We will not be judged by what others do or fail to do. We will be judged by how we tell the story—or fail to. **(Continued on page 6)**

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**“Slow of speech.”** This is one that gave me trouble. I have problems expressing myself at times. The funny thing is, the more I apply myself to study and meditation the easier it is to control the mind and the tongue. Do we really have trouble talking about things that are really interesting to us—like grandchildren, sports, our job, etc.? Do you suppose it could be that we’re just not properly motivated?

**“Send someone else.”** In our hectic lifestyles and busy schedules, it is easy to succumb to this temptation. We reason that if we give “liberally” (say, way up around \$50 or \$60 a week on a forty thousand plus income?) that we can expect the preacher or someone who “has more time” to do the “personal work.” I see a contradiction of terms and someone who himself needs to be converted. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God?” Personal evangelism boils down to personal conviction and dedication and zeal and sincerity.

In a survey of 10,000 people by the Institute for American Church Growth, this question was asked. “What was responsible for your coming to Christ and His church?” The answers: “Special need, 2%; I just walked in, 3%; I liked the minister, 6%; Visited there, 1%; I liked the Sunday School, 5%; I liked the programs, 3%; A friend or relative invited me, 79%” Personal evangelism has no equal. Do it!

*Delmer Hightower (Christianity Magazine, Vol. 1, #8, 1984)*

**KEY SCRIPTURE: JEREMIAH 17:7-8.**

# ARE YOU A TREE OR A STUMP?

"What was the difference between the tree and the post? One was dead and the other was alive."

**T**his question may seem strange to you, but there is a good lesson to be learned in the answer. So, read on.

When I was a young man growing up in the country, part of a large family, our family owned and raised cows. The cows supplemented our meals since they provided milk for us kids to drink and butter for our bread. Some of them were ever slaughtered to provide meat for the table. Having cattle was also useful in teaching me and my siblings the responsibility of a work ethic since some of us had to milk them twice a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.



These cows were kept in a fenced pasture which had to be constantly checked to make sure there were no holes through which the cows could escape. From time to time some of the fence posts had to be replaced since they were rotten. They would fall over and cause the fence to sag providing the cows with a way to get out. This was a source of aggravation to me and my brothers since we had to round up the cows that got out and then repair the fence by replacing the posts. This required both time and work. And you know how kids enjoy such things. I sometimes wished the posts would be like trees so they wouldn't rot and have to be replaced. **(Continued on page 8)**

**(Cont. from page 7)**

What made the difference? Think about it! Plant a post and a tree in the ground, side by side. In the beginning, the tree is small, slender, and easily bent or broken. The post, on the other hand, is large, solid, and strong. It is hard to move and will support a fence. But then the forces of nature take over. The tree begins to grow little by little, gradually becoming bigger and stronger. In a few years, it stands tall and sturdy, while the post planted at the same time has now become rotten and soon falls. What was the difference between the tree and the post? One was dead and the other was alive. The tree, being alive, continued to develop and mature. That is why it got stronger with time. On the other hand, the post was dead, and the ravages of time caused it to become weaker until it collapsed.



Now for the application. What about those of us who claim to be Christians? Are we like the tree or the post? If our religious life is like the post, then we will surely grow weaker year by year, until we finally fall away and die spiritually. But, if we are truly alive in Christ, then the passing years will see us grow stronger and more mature than we were when we first began our lives as Christians. As Christians, we have been made alive by the regenerating power of the blood of Christ Tit.3:5. Afterward, real spiritual life in us is maintained by fellowship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and fellow Christians of like precious faith 2.Pet.1:1; 1.Jn.1:1-7.

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**KEY SCRIPTURE: 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-15.**

# THE NECESSITY OF BIBLE READING & STUDY

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:14–15, ESV).

**O**ne of the simplest reasons to express the necessity of Bible Study is to establish a genuine faith-life (consider **Rom** 1:16-17; 10:17). Unsurprisingly, a major issue with people in religion today is a lack of true and accurate Bible knowledge. This often results in shallow spirituality. Whether one is a disciple of Jesus or not, one will never be able to fully experience the life that God has planned for him without true Bible knowledge. Bible study is more than just important, it is crucial. Here are a few reasons why...

## **God Produced & Preserved It Through The Ages (1 Pet 1:24-25)**

*God protected it so you could read it*

The Bible came into existence as God revealed Himself to human agents in such a manner that they recorded accurately and free from human error whatever was divinely disclosed to them (**2 Tim** 3:16-17; **2 Pet** 1:20-21). This process is called inspiration, which means that God breathed His Word into the minds of the human authors. They, in turn, under the Holy Spirit's guidance wrote down what was given to them (see also **1 Cor** 2:6-16). The result of inspiration is a written revelation once for all given and thoroughly accredited. Fulfilled prophecy, miracles, and the fulfilling of God's will through human experiences, all attest to the fact of the inspiration of Scripture. **(Continued on page 10)**

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God did all of this (throughout history) so that His Word could be examined and studied, not sitting on a shelf collecting dust. When I read and study my Bible outside the assembly, not only am I teaching myself that it's important, but that the knowledge and wisdom of God really mean a lot to me.

**It's The Foundational Source Through Which God Draws People To Himself (Jn 6:43-45)**

The Word of God has always been the main force that is able to pull us deeper and closer to God. The author of Hebrews revealed to his audience that faith has always been essential for establishing a true relationship with God. *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."* (**Heb** 11:6, NKJV). God, of course, is the developer and provider of this *faith* (**Rom** 10:17; **Heb** 12:2), this is how a true seeker of God is "taught of God" (**Jn** 6:45). The goal of being drawn and taught of God is to prep one to become a disciple of Jesus. Sin destroys fellowship with God, but Jesus alone has the power to bridge the gap (**Jn** 14:6; **Col** 1:19-21; **1 Tim** 2:5). This uniquely amazing fellowship between God and humans continues with simple bible reading and study. Are you constantly being drawn and taught by God, or are the devil and the world tugging you away?

**To Develop A Personal Authentic Faith**

Basically speaking, faith is simply a conviction. At some point in our walk with Jesus, we must ask ourselves, "What has influenced me to be firmly convinced of what I believe?" Why are we convinced that a particular passage of Scripture is to be interpreted or understood the way that we think? A brother in Christ once asked me what I thought was the biggest problem facing the Lord's church today. My reply was, "Christians not reading and knowing their Bibles enough."

**(Continued on page 11)**



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Unfortunately, for many Christians, their faith and conviction are developed from secondhand information, instead of developing and cultivating their own faith through constant Bible reading and study.



It really is astounding to me how some Christians will strongly base their beliefs on what another preacher said or wrote about a particular topic from the Scriptures. I remember an instance in a Bible class where the Instructor got into an argument with one of the members of the church. It was over a disagreement about how a particular passage of Scripture should have been interpreted. The church member was actually correct, although his interpretation was not a popular one among some, it was textually correct. The class instructor was arguing from the perspective of a particular preacher and what that preacher had written in a commentary. The preacher's assessment of the passage was popular but textually incorrect. After the Bible class, I approached the instructor to discuss this further. He replied out of irritation, "Well then, I guess we should write the preacher of this commentary and tell him he doesn't know what he's talking about."

It's scary how some are more zealous to defend what they are convinced is right because it is popular or because it's how a well-known preacher sees it, instead of simply being zealous to defend what the context of Scripture is actually teaching. The more we read and study our Bibles, the better chances we have of developing and cultivating authentic faith. And with a genuine faith formulated through the study of the Scriptures, we can truly become effective disciples for the Lord.

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## KEY SCRIPTURE: **MATTHEW 7:7-11.**

# PRAYER PASSCODE

“We should avoid basing our prayers upon our perceived friendship with God, and keep on being persistent in praying.”

**A**re there obstacles to overcome for a successful prayer? I think that there are some legitimate things that stop us from praying which we should address. And let me say on the outset of this article that for every obstacle perceived, there are greater answers that overrule each obstacle. Very few Christians that I have met are satisfied with the way they pray. Why is that? Surely it is because there are obstacles in our minds that stop us. I have a passcode to enter my garage. I have a passcode to enter my phone. I have a passcode to log in to my computer, online banking, etc. etc. Without the passcode, you don't have access. You are denied entry and that is a bad day! But what if you could overcome every mental obstacle that keeps you from praying? What if you had a passcode for prayer? I don't think just one article is going to give you that passcode, but I think addressing each obstacle is extremely helpful.



**1) Why should I pray if God already knows what I need before I ask him? (Matt. 6:8).** Ever have this thought? I have. Am I not wasting my time talking to God who knows what I am going to say before I say it? “Even before there is a word on my tongue, **(Continued on page 13)**”

**(Cont. from page 12)**

Behold, O LORD, You know it all." (Ps. 139:4). **PASSCODE 1:** If I look at prayer as giving God fresh, up-to-date information, I'm not looking at prayer or God the right way. When I send this 🙄 emoji to my wife in a text, I too am not giving her new information, but that doesn't stop me from texting it to her regularly, daily! Even though we live in the same house and I spend more time with her than anyone else on earth, I still emoji her. Granted, God doesn't need my 🙏, but I am seeking a deep relationship with God that I am still building with each prayer. 17 times Jesus used the word "Father" in one sermon (Mat. 5-7). In this sermon he taught us to pray, "Our Father...". Prayer, fasting and alms were to be done, building up a secret relationship with him (Mat. 6:1-18). The Father wants a secret relationship with you. A relationship that is deeper than wife and family, a connection soul to soul, spirit to spirit (1Cor. 6:17). Make the Father your soul mate through Christ, he is willing. Jesus commands you to have this deep relationship with the Father, "ask, seek, knock, bleed". No, Jesus didn't say bleed, but if you stop and think about it, Jesus did. Jesus bled so we could have this deep relationship with His Father. Without the bleeding Jesus, I have no passcode, no access.

**2. God doesn't seem to answer my prayers.** This is your obstacle? **PASSCODE 2:** What was God's answer to Jesus in the garden? Yes and No. Let me explain my "no" part first. When Jesus asked God to remove the cup of suffering, the cup of wrath, the Father said "no". Therefore Jesus drank the cup empty. Now the "yes" part corresponds to how he finished praying, "He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." (Matt. 26:42). So God did answer "yes" my will be done. So Jesus made his prayer about doing the Father's will. Should this become the center of my prayer too? I do not need to change God, but he needs to change me. Jesus prayed earnestly three times. A big temptation for him was at hand (Matt. 26:38-46). The disciples slept, in the face of their temptation. Jesus got up and overcame. The disciples got up and fell into temptation, some of them headlong. Herein lies the passcode of overcoming temptation. Jesus gives us the formula, but we sleep.

**(Continued on page 14)**

**(Cont. from page 13)**

**3. Don't have enough faith to pray?** Ahhh, no one says that, but Jesus. Yes Jesus, from his third person point of view sees it and says it, then answers it. The disciples of Jesus saw Jesus pray often. So the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus spends only three verses teaching a prayer (Lk.11:2-4). Then Jesus spends nine verses leading them towards having enough faith to pray (Lk.5-13). Obviously Jesus focuses more heavily on the faith behind the prayer than the prayer itself. Examining this passage more closely we can see Jesus trying to



get us to avoid one thing in our prayers, and then to base our prayers in two things. 1) Being persistent in prayer. Jesus says, "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs." (Lk. 11:8, 18:1-8 also). We should avoid basing our prayers upon our perceived friendship with God, and keep on being persistent in praying. "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Lk. 11:9). 2) The Nature of God. So the second thing we **(Continued on page 15)**

**(Cont. from page 14)**

should base our prayers in is God's nature vs. our earthly father's, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more..."(Lk. 11:13).

Looking now at a second time Jesus put faith and prayer together is found in the disciples' failure. The disciples failed, the demon was left tormenting the child (Mark 9:14-29/ Matt. 17:14-19). WHY?? It depends who telling the story. In Mark's account the story concludes, "And He said to them, 'This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.'" (Mk. 9:29). But in Matthew the account ends, "Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not drive it out?' And He said to them, 'Because of the littleness of your faith'" (Matt. 17:19-20). [[I'm quoting from the New American Standard, 1995 updated edition. The old KJV and NKJV base their English on newer Greek manuscripts (12th-14th Century), while the NAU base their translation on the oldest manuscripts (2nd - 5th Century)]].

So, Matthew records Jesus' point about faith and Mark records Jesus' point about prayer. The disciples do not seem to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane or when they couldn't cast out the demon. Why didn't it occur to them to pray? Sleepy faith? But once Jesus leaves them, and goes up to heaven, and they do not have him there in their midst to rely on, things change. He is gone. Now it's up to them? What do we find them doing? "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers"(Acts 1:14).

After a series of fumbles, mistakes and failures while he was still with them, now we see different men. Even their enemies are taken back, "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). They had begun to believe hard and pray hard. They began to pray like Jesus, then they began to act like Jesus. Is there a pattern forming here? They didn't stop, they were praying all the time, "And they prayed and said... 42 They were (**Continued on page 16**)

**(Cont. from page 15)**

continually devoting themselves to ... prayer... Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer... And when they had prayed..." (Acts 1:14,24; 2:42; 4:31). No wonder their enemies were impressed, they were untrained and uneducated but not underprayed or without confidence. They had been trained to pray by the best. Let us join them.



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**KEY SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:24.**

# TAKING CARE HOW WE WORSHIP

“Many people today care far too much about where they worship rather than how they worship.”

*“The woman said to him, ‘Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’” (John 4:19–24, ESV)*

**O**ver the course of her conversation with Jesus, the Samaritan woman realizes that the man she is talking to is not an ordinary man. She perceives (as verse 19 says) that Jesus is a prophet. At this point, she could have asked any number of questions, but instead, she asks a religious question about worship. The Jews believed that the place to worship God was on Mt. Zion, while the Samaritans believed that the place to worship God was on Mt. Gerizim. This was no doubt a highly debated topic at that time between Jews and Samaritans.

There was some bad blood over this topic between these two groups of people for quite some time. The tension over this issue between the Jews and the Samaritans led to the temple on Gerizim being destroyed by either John Hyrcanus in the 2nd century BCE (according to Josephus) or by Simeon the Just (according to the Talmud). Around the time of Jesus’ birth, a band of Samaritans profaned the Temple in Jerusalem by scattering the bones of dead people in the **(Continued on page 18)**



**(Cont. from page 17)**

sanctuary. It is no surprise that when she realizes that the Jewish man she is talking to is a prophet, she asks the religious question of the day. Where is the proper place to worship God?



What is interesting about this passage is Jesus' response. He does not turn to the Samaritan woman and give a list of reasons and arguments why Mt. Zion in Jerusalem is the proper place to worship God. That is probably what a Pharisee would have done. However, Jesus also did not say, "It does not really matter where you worship God. Just worship wherever you feel is correct." He deals very quickly with the question (verse 22 - the Jews are correct) but then gets to the deeper issue.

At this moment in history, the Jews were correct in where to worship God. However, Jesus says the real question of worship will not be *where* to worship but *how* one worships. Jesus goes on to say that the true worshiper, the person God is seeking, is someone who worships in spirit and in truth. To worship in spirit means to worship with the right attitude. People are not to worship God in **(Continued on page 19)**



**(Cont. from page 18)**

a carnal way. True worship must be sincere and from the heart. However, worship must not only be in spirit but also in truth. God is searching for people who will worship him as he has authorized in the way he has commanded. Jesus is urging the Samaritan woman to consider how one is to worship rather than just where to worship.

Many people today care far too much about where they worship rather than how they worship. People think as long as they just go to a church, God will be pleased with their worship. Other people believe that as long as they go to the right church, God will be pleased with their worship. Neither is necessarily the case. Someone could worship at a scripturally correct church (the right location), but if they are not worshipping with the right attitude (spirit) in the correct way (truth), God will not be pleased with their worship. It is up to every Christian to reflect on their attitude and actions while worshipping and determine if God will be pleased by their worship.



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## KEY SCRIPTURE: LUKE 17:5

# INCREASE YOUR FAITH

No matter where you assemble with the Saints, if your faith-life is not where it should be, you cannot be the asset the Lord needs you to be for His kingdom.

**B**y definition, faith is simple. But when placed in the context of the Christian life, it becomes complex. This is because living for Christ involves many different facets of service. Many often mistakenly limit the concept of faith-life to simply possessing a trust. But Scripture actually expands this. Yes, faith is about trust, but not just about trust. The life of a Christian is about what he will do with the faith/trust he's established in Jesus. What will that faith look like in realtime? This was the focus of James when he wrote the following...

*"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?" (Jam 2:14, ESV).*

And...

*"But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (Jam 2:18, ESV).*

Faith sitting on a shelf looks nice. But faith in action is useful! Hence, living a faith-life goes beyond strong stagnant inner feelings of trusting Jesus. These convictions and feelings--founded in Biblical knowledge, must drive us to conduct lives in service to Christ!

So then, a disciple's effectiveness is linked to his faith. How effective will we be in our service to Christ? That will depend upon the condition of our faith.

**(Continued on page 21)**

**(Cont. from page 20)**

We must examine ourselves. And, if we discover that our faith is not where it should be, we ought to change. Perhaps we need to increase our faith.

**Increasing Our Faith**

You owe it to your spouse, children, church, community, occupation, and most of all—God, to become a better disciple. All disciples should increase and strengthen their faith. Here are a few reasons why...

- 1) It is the life-code of those justified by God (**Rom 1:16-17; 2 Cor 5:7**).
- 2) Impossible to please God without it (**Heb 11:6**).
- 3) Cannot receive the rewards of God without it (**Heb 11:6**)
- 4) To see and understand God's plan (**Rom 1:16-17; 2 Cor 2:1-16**).
- 5) It is the basis for real peace (**Rom 15:13; 2 Pet 1:1-2**).
- 6) Actions not springing from faith are sinful (**Rom 14:23**).
- 7) Necessary to avoid eternal condemnation (**2 Thes 2:11-12**).

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**KEY SCRIPTURE: JOHN 13:34-35.**

# PROVING OURSELVES DISCIPLES BY OUR LOVE

“When visitors to our worship service witness the love between the brethren, that love speaks louder than anything we could post on our sign in front of the building! Not only on the first day of the week but also throughout the week, the love saints show for one another identifies them as disciples of Christ.”

**E**very 10 years, the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB - USReligionCensus.org) performs the massive task of counting religious congregations in the US. In 2010, the organization counted 236 religious groups, with 344,894 congregations and 150,686,156 regular participants. Individuals sometimes struggle for a correct response when asked, “What are you religiously?”

Congregations struggle for a correct posting on the sign outside their building that will make them distinct from other churches and relay their core beliefs.

One might ask, “Does the bible say anything about how Christians in the 21st century identify themselves as simply Christians, followers of Christ and His word?” Of course, God’s word tells us,

*But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. - 1 Peter 4:16 (NASB).*

Still, in the 1st century denominations did not exist. The creation of the current protestant denominations did not occur for hundreds of years after 1st century Christianity. So, since 1st century Christians didn’t have the problem we do today of identifying (**Continued on page 23**)

**(Cont. from page 22)**

ourselves as simply Christians, what are some ways scriptures show us how to identify ourselves as simply disciples of Christ? Of course, adherence to the Word of Christ is one way to identify ourselves as simply Christians (John 12:48) but there is another passage that helps with our identity.

**The Commandment of Love**

I believe that one answer to this dilemma can be found in the 13th chapter of the gospel of John.

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. - John 13:34-35 (NASB).*

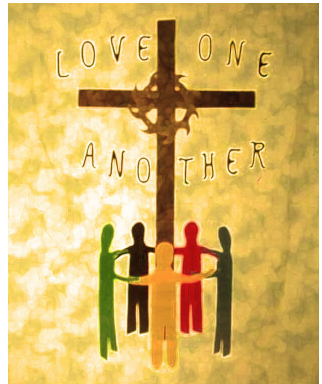
The commandment to love one another was not a new commandment.

*You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD. - Leviticus 19:18 (NASB).*

Christ quotes this passage from Leviticus when asked by the scribes, "What is the greatest commandment?" (Mark 12:28-31). Although the commandment to love one another was not new, Christ's commandment was new for several reasons.

**Love One Another**

Christ's command was new in direction. As followers in Christ, we have a fellowship in Christ that is stronger and more meaningful than any other bond that had ever existed previously. *Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. - 2 Peter 1:1 (NASB).* **(Continued on page 24)**



**(Cont. from page 23)**

*Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life." - Mark 10:28-30 (NASB).*



**Even as I Have Loved You**

Christ's command was new in Strength. The love that we are to have for one another is to exemplify the love of Christ.

*This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. - John 15:12-13 (NASB).*

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. - 1 John 4:7-11 (NASB). **(Continued on page 25)***

**(Cont. from page 24)**

Many lengthy articles can be written on the love of Christ....

*"Could we with ink the ocean fill, And were the skies of parchment made; Were every stalk on earth a quill, And every man a scribe by trade; To write the love of God above Would drain the ocean dry; Nor could the scroll contain the whole, Though stretched from sky to sky."*

-The Love of God by Frederick M. Lehman

**By this all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another**

Finally, Christ's command was new in purpose. The commandment to love one another as Christ has loved us is evangelical. When visitors to our worship service witness the love between the brethren, that love speaks louder than anything we could post on our sign in front of the building! Not only on the first day of the week but also throughout the week, the love saints show for one another identifies them as disciples of Christ. Of course, the opposite is also true. It is difficult for others to identify us as disciples of Christ when there is constant bickering and fighting.

*If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. – 1 John 4:20-21 NASB*

We show our love for the Lord by keeping His commandment (John 14:15) but we also demonstrate our love for the Lord and show ourselves as disciples of Christ by the love we show for one another (see John 21:15-17; Matthew 25:31-46).

**(Continued on page 26)**



**(Cont. from page 25)**

*How sweet, how heav'nly is the sight, When those who love the Lord  
In one another's peace delight, And so fulfill His Word: When each can  
feel his brother's sigh, And with him bear a part;  
When sorrow flows from eye to eye, And joy from heart to heart;  
When, free from envy, scorn and pride, Our wishes all above,  
Each can his brother's failings hide, And show a brother's love;  
When love, in one delightful stream, Through every bosom flows;  
When union sweet, and dear esteem, In every action glows.  
Love is the golden chain that binds; The saints Thy grace thus prove.  
And he is glory's heir that finds His bosom glow with love.*

- How Sweet, How Heavenly (Lyrics, Joseph Swain)



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**KEY SCRIPTURE: 1 PETER 1:14-16.**

# THE DISCIPLE'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S HOLINESS

“Unless we recognize the holiness of God, we cannot become His disciples. If we become His disciples, we must be holy as He is holy.”

**T**he Hebrew word translated as holiness can be defined as “apartness, holiness, sacredness, separateness” (A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Brown-Driver-Briggs). The Greek word has to do with sanctity, coming from the root word translated holy, meaning “sacred” and “consecrated” (Strong’s Greek Dictionary). Ultimately, the word means to be distinctly different from what is common, to be set apart from others; holiness means “otherness”.

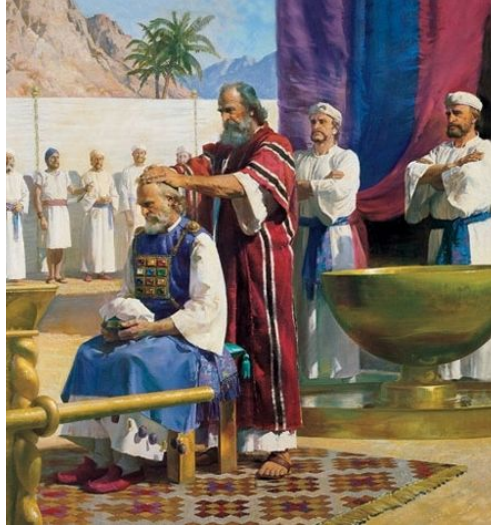
The holiness of God is depicted in his instruction to the nation He selected as his chosen people, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 19:2). He intended Israel to be a “holy nation” (Ex 19:6), distinctly separate from all other nations (Lev 20:26). From the Israelites, He designated a single tribe for His holy service, the tribe of Levi (2 Chr 23:6), proven to all the tribes by selecting Aaron’s rod from among the twelve rods representing each tribe (Num 17). From among the Levites, the house of Aaron was consecrated to serve as priests (Ex 30:30).

The holiness of God is demonstrated in the elements of religion under the Law of Moses. The tabernacle was to be built according to God’s specific instructions (Ex 25:9). Similarly, the recipes for the priests’ anointing oil and the incense to be burned before the LORD was likewise given a distinct formula, forbidden to be used for any other purpose (Ex 30:31-38). The holy place in the tabernacle was set apart from the rest of the transportable temple, and the holiest place, or holy of holies, was separated from the holy tent by a veil ornamented with images of **(Continued on page 28)**

**(Cont. from page 27)**

cherubim (Ex 26:31-33). Only once each year, one man, the High Priest wearing the words “Holy to the LORD” upon his brow (Ex 28:36-38), would make atonement before the mercy seat upon the ark of the covenant (Lev 16).

The holiness of God is discovered in His appearances to men. Moses entreated the LORD to see His glory. God granted his request, but only allowed Moses to see his back as He passed by His servant (Ex 33:18-23). God’s glory is so sacred, so separate, that man cannot see His face and live.



This sentiment is echoed by others who feared their death after being visited by the angel of the LORD (Jdg 6:22; 13:22). But we can learn from the testimonies of two men who perceived God’s holiness...

**Isaiah witnessed the holiness of God.(Isaiah 6:1-5)**

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!’ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!’”

In this vision, Isaiah saw the glory of God in His throne room. The seraphim declared his glory, three times praising Him as holy. The foundations themselves spoke of His holiness by quaking with smoke filling the temple. The presence of the LORD is unlike anything **(Continued on page 29)**

**(Cont. from page 28)**

ever perceived by humankind. Isaiah witnessed these things and spoke reverently in his amazement, confessing his own unworthiness to be in the presence of a holy God. Only after recognizing the vast difference between man and his Maker, the creation and the Creator, was Isaiah ready to begin his service to his Lord by proclaiming the King and His kingdom to the people of God. Isaiah's response to his Master's call for a messenger was to volunteer for service, saying, "Here I am! Send me." (Isa 6:8)

**Peter witnessed the holiness of Jesus. (Luke 5:4-8)**

"And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.' And Simon answered, 'Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.' And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish,



and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so

**(Continued on page 30)**

**(Cont. from page 29)**

that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'"

Simon Peter had heard Jesus teaching as He addressed the crowds on the shore while seated in Simon's boat. When this man, whether Simon thought him to be a carpenter's son by trade or a Rabbi teaching God's word, instructed the professional fisherman where to fish, he complied (however reluctantly). The results were astonishing — they had caught so many fish that the fishermen needed two boats to bring in such a great catch. Simon Peter, like Isaiah, recognized the vast difference between himself and this teacher. And like Isaiah, Peter confessed his own unworthiness to be in the presence of someone so unlike himself. Jesus was holy; Simon Peter was merely a man. But to quell the fear of the fisherman, Jesus graciously called Peter into His service, telling him, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." (Lk 5:10).

Isaiah was a messenger of God, prophesying of the kingdom of the Messiah. Peter was a disciple of Jesus, the Christ who came to build His kingdom. Both men followed their God faithfully: listening and learning, believing and obeying. They lived as servants; they served as disciples.

Isaiah preached to Israel in expectation of the coming kingdom. Peter preached to Israel, proclaiming that the kingdom had come. The message was the same: a message of hope and help, redemption and restoration. But the times in which they lived were different. Isaiah called people to the law of Moses; Peter called people to the grace of Christ. Peter opened the door for men to enter the kingdom of God; to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 2:10). He spoke of Jesus, bringing men to faith in Him, calling them to repent and be immersed in His name for forgiveness of sins. He spoke of what he knew, for he had been with Jesus for more than three years, hearing His words, seeing His works, walking and talking with the Lord and learning of His ways. He revealed what he knew about Jesus, both what he had experienced himself and what he was granted through the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:25-26; 15:26-27).

Peter, a disciple of Jesus, fulfilled the Lord's great commission by making disciples and teaching them to follow his Lord, the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Mt 16:16; 28:19-20). Peter teaches disciples still today through the words he penned by inspiration of the Holy **(Continued on page 31)**

**(Cont. from page 30)**

Spirit, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” (1 Pet 1:14-16).

In these words we learn — not of God’s holiness, for that is already known — but of our call to be like our God. We are called to be separate, apart from the world, sacred to the Lord. We are called to be holy as God is holy. Unless we recognize the holiness of God, we cannot become His disciples. If we become His disciples, we must be holy as He is holy.



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## FREE LESSON OUTLINE

# ADMITTING WRONG

Opening Text: **2 Samuel** 12:13.

*"David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' And Nathan said to David, 'The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.'"*

A) **Saul (1 Sam 15:10-24; 24:16-22; 1 Sam 26:21.)**

- 1) He was twice confronted regarding major disobedience.
- 2) He twice blames the people rather than admitting his wrong.
- 3) Admitted wrong, twice to David but wasn't deeply sincere.

B) **David (2 Sam 11-12; Psa 51).**

- 1) David sinned with Bathsheba, killed her husband.
- 2) He went through a time of tremendous turmoil.
- 3) He only admitted wrong after a direct confrontation from God, through Nathan (**2 Sam 12:1-13**).

C) **The Lost Son (Lk 15:11-32).**

- 1) He acted in self-will.
- 2) He got into a terrible mess.
- 3) He admitted his wrong after there was nowhere else to turn.

D) **We** must confess and admit our sins.

- 1) Acknowledging and admitting wrongdoing is the beginning of repentance and forgiveness.
- 2) **1 Jn 1:5-9.** (For Christians).
- 3) **Rom 10:5-13.** (For non-Christians).

### Conclusion

The hardest words to say in the whole wide world are, "I was wrong." When was the last time you admitted your wrongs? It could do wonders!