

Christianity

is intimacy

with the God of Love

Christianity is true intimacy with God

Becoming a Christian is unrestrained intimacy with God through repentance and obedience to all He has commanded for those who would follow Jesus Christ. Becoming a Christian also means unrestricted engagement with people who belong to the true Church of Jesus Christ. In love God calls us to love Him. *'We love, because He first loved us.'* 1 John 4:19

Jesus didn't come to tell us to get people saved, He came to make disciples who would be intimate with Him and serve Him by taking part in His mission on earth. However, for some time the message in many churches has been, *'If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.'* (Rom 10:9) But this is only part of the truth.

Jesus commands us to go and make disciples who will obey Him. *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the*

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Matt 28:18-20

Jesus makes it very clear that those who believe in Him were to become His disciples especially to follow His example. *“He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honour him.”*

John 12: 25-26

Getting saved from sin and being comfortable in the world as we were before wasn't what Jesus had in mind. What He is calling us to do is to put obedience to Him and His mission before everything we have in the world, including ourselves. If we want to love our life in the world and have priorities other than doing what He did, we cannot follow Him

intimately and continue to eternal life. The word of God says, *'Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'*

1 John 2:15

Confessing with our mouth that Jesus is Lord can only have meaning when we have denied our life in the world to truly follow His example of self sacrifice in order to receive eternal life in heaven. To believe in Jesus, means obeying Jesus. *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* (John 3:36) *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."* John 14:15

According to Jesus we cannot just become Christians because we think it's a good idea. We cannot become Christian just because we grow up in a Christian family. We cannot become Christian because we pass some sort of religious examination. Jesus has told us that we become Christian only when we love Him enough to give up all we hold precious to

follow Him through repentance, (Luke 5:32) by a rebirth by the Spirit (John 3:3, 7) and in following the example He set for us by the empowered of His Spirit. Rom 8:11-14

Those who want to claim their conversion as something they have achieved will be disappointed when Christ comes again, then they will find that they have nothing but their own idea of salvation; for in order to gain new life in Christ we must die to the old life we lived in the flesh to be born of the Spirit in order to please God. Rom 8:5-8

Becoming a Christian is not the goal to be achieved in this life; it is only the beginning of a completely new life in love with God. Conversion is the beginning of a process of spiritual transformation into the image of the Son of God. It is not the end of things as if we have arrived, but just the beginning of God working in us to transform us into the image of His Son. Many people see conversion as the goal to be achieved, so after an initial

phase of adjustment, they happily coast along in their new life of faith. However coasters are not faithful to Christ because the goal for them was completed when they decided for themselves what was required.

Instead of understanding Christianity as disciplined discipleship that continues to develop over time, they believe that they have already arrived at the place where they are pleasing to God.

Telling people the only requirement for becoming a Christian to receive eternal life is calling Jesus Christ Lord is untrue, it cuts out the need for repentance, it doesn't require leaving the world behind to follow Christ through the narrow gate, (Matt 7:13-14) and it fails to explain that the only way to have the life Jesus Christ offers is to deny ourselves and take out our cross to follow Him. Luke 9:23

As a result of giving the wrong message about what salvation requires, we have assisted the work of the prince of darkness by disobeying

our Lord by including anyone into the church who will say Christ is Lord, but who have no real intention to bow down in obedience and follow His example of a sacrificial life. If we offer Christian life without the requirements Jesus demands, we have not understood what Jesus taught and we set people up to think they are saved because they can now join a church and coast along in life as long as they adjust some of their behaviour.

True salvation is intimacy with God

True salvation doesn't allow for passive passengers who sit down and wait for a bus to take them to heaven. Real salvation requires that we are born again by God to live with God in love. Being born again enquires we repent of our rebellion and disobedience and turn away from the life we once lived to receive God's forgiveness, and then we need to live by the Spirit of God who will take over absolute dominion in our lives to teach us and guide us into the fullness of intimate life with

Jesus Christ. For this to be effective we must offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. *'Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.'* Rom 12:1-2

True Christians are chosen by God

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

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:44) "For many are called, but few are chosen." Matt 22:14

'But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because

God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.' 2 Thess 2:13

The chosen are called by God

'Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.' 2 Tim 1:8-9

'I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.' Eph 1:18

If we choose we are doing our own work

Our salvation is not the result of our own efforts, or our choosing to be Christians because we want to go to heaven. Getting saved from sin and death is all God's work.

'For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.'

Eph 2:8-9

When God calls and chooses His children He does so by the conviction of our sin with the need for heartfelt repentance to be rid of self and the world in order to gain new life in Christ. (Rom 6:4-6) *"He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal."*

John 12:25

Those who have chosen Christ for themselves without repentance and willingly dying to self want to coast along as Christians, but they face serious danger. They are behaving like the truck driver who relies on gravity to get him down the hill. This is what we used to call being in angel gear. Angel gear is forbidden because it can have deadly consequences. Angel gear is driving with the vehicle in neutral without due care and attention that will often result in death.

Coasting along is costly, you can meet the angels on the way.

When we see a sign saying, "Steep decent, trucks use low gear," we have to understand that we need positive control, because there are dangerous turns ahead. The most dangerous roads on earth require our full attention. Walking in the world as a true Christian is a dangerous road.

Being distracted from the path of Christ is very dangerous. Saving effort in driving in angel gear could mean not arriving. Occasional attractions are deadly distractions. Successful driving requires the vehicle to be encouraged in a positive gear for better control, limiting the possibility of catastrophe. The proper use of defensive driving skills, mean anticipating dangerous unexpected events.

The same truth is applicable for the Christian walk. Complacency kills. Faith follows where our focus is fixed, being distracted by the

scenery of the world could mean running off the road. Behaving as unbelievers would live will certainly place us in grave danger.

Human existence is not a walk in the park with God in the Garden of Eden. When sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam, the power of darkness entered the world and changed all the sign posts. Jesus came into the world as the true way to God to do battle with the powers of darkness. All those who are called by God to follow Jesus continue in His work of love for all.

Christianity is spiritual conscription into God's army for spiritual warfare with the power of darkness. A soldier on active duty doesn't get involved with worldly things, he continues to practice combat drills for engaging and confronting the enemy in battle. A good soldier doesn't get caught up in the affairs of the world. 2 Tim 2:4

The soldier on active duty has all his senses alerted for signs of the enemy. Even when he

is eating, his weapon is at hand. The soldier on active duty is always alert, even when not on search and destroy operations he is on guard duty to prevent surprise attacks.

A lack of contact with the enemy today doesn't mean he has gone home to leave us in peace. The battle continues tomorrow. The enemy prowls around looking for people to devour.

1 Pet 5:8

Life in Christ means there are no days off. The nature of the spiritual war means if we are not vigilant we will be unable to walk as Jesus walked and fall back on living according to the world and the flesh.

We sometimes go into neutral gear as Christians and find ourselves living like the unsaved. However being changed into His image is ongoing and requires us to be vigilant all the time. We must always be careful, watchful, and ready to deny fleshly attitudes in us. If we are coasting along we can run off the road far too easily.

Real spiritual life requires real effort

The process of growing in holiness begins with the surface dirt; then we continue to get to the ingrained hidden decay of the heart and mind to root it out. Many are comfortable with surface cleaning and then sit down and take it easy as if the whole work of God in them is complete.

Christian life requires determined effort in resisting the urge of the flesh to stay the same as worldly sinners. Real spiritual life means the Spirit of God will work at preventing God's children compromising their faith, so He will disturb the disciple so much we will have to seek our true calling in God. *'No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.'* (1 John 3:9) This does not mean we will not stumble sometimes, but it does mean we will not go on doing what is not pleasing to God.

A life of coasting along may be a comfort to some who are fleshly, but it denies our calling to grow up into Christ. (Eph 4:15) The flesh life only wants to coast along by resisting the call of the Spirit to draw nearer to God. The flesh is happy with remaining immature and avoids true intimacy with God and shuns any actual involvement in the spiritual battle.

Spiritual maturity requires intimacy

We who are saved by the gracious love of God should naturally desire intimacy with God, but the closer we get to Him the more we see what shouldn't be in His presence. However, even as we struggle with our short comings we can still experience the fullness of His love encouraging us to continue to put away the flesh life.

Real intimacy with God requires absolute transparency that can only happen when we are willing to surrender all so the Spirit of God can reveal what we need to deal with that does not represent Christ. Under the Spirit's

leading we are able to deal with one hidden defect at a time. God loves His children and calls all His people to become mature in their faith by confronting everything in their lives which is inconsistent with the life of Christ.

The pursuit of holy intimacy is a battle between the flesh and the Spirit, and we cannot please ourselves. *'For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.'* Gal 5:17

Many want to take "*you may not do the things you please*" to mean we cannot overcome the flesh in this spiritual war, that we have no power to please God. But the verse 16 says we can defeat the flesh. *'But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.'* (Gal 5:16) But walking in the Spirit cannot be achieved by coasting along. Walking in the Spirit requires discipline and determination. Walking in the Spirit will

mean we will have to confront our inner ugliness we want to hide from the world, and sometimes try to hide from God.

The secret to intimacy's success is walking in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit means we work hard at putting to death that which is earthly in us. Col 3:5

Intimacy with God means trusting Him

Christian intimacy depends on looking to God for what we need. When we look to the world, to the difficulty we have and the people who have let us down, and we feel hard done by, we show we haven't understood that when people are not as good as we would like it is because they are not looking to God and we are not looking to God either.

If we look to God He will keep us in perfect peace. (Isa 26:3) The failing of people requires understand and mercy, for they cannot be more than the level of their intimacy with God allows. If we want more intimacy with God He wants more of us committed to Him.

If we are to walk with God, more of God's life in us is required to be revealed to the world from our intimacy. But if we are complaining, angry, worldly, greedy, disrespectful, demanding and unforgiving we are living in a way we should expect from those who have little or no intimacy with God. Those who know God's mercy should have His heart for the sinner. "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*"

Matt 5:7

As Christ suffered for sins without complaining, so His disciples should suffer and not complain because we follow His example. '*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*'

Phil 2:5-6

'*And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny*

himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Luke 9:23-24

Disciples who have died to self have no reason to complain; in love they now look to God for all their needs.

God loves them with an everlasting love; He has shared the glory of Christ Jesus with them by exalting them with His life and His mission. (John 17:22) He will give them a crown if they overcome the world and sins temptation. The cross they carry in self denial for the benefit of others on earth is not a burden but an honour for their exaltation in heaven. God's love is sufficient for all our needs. Eternal life above requires our death to self below.

True intimacy is not dead religion

The difference between life and death is between those who are being changed into

Christ likeness, or those having a religious imitation of their own making.

The Father's greatest desire is to transform all who are His into the image of Christ. We can know He is working when we feel shame and a sense of betrayal when we behave in a way that is not consistent with the life of Christ.

If we are not quickly moved to confess our failure to people we have wronged in word or deed, then God is not working in us and we have been mistaken for thinking we have His Spirit working in us, for this is the Spirit's undertaking.

When we are driven to our knees in confession for our sinful behaviour we can know He forgives us, but we can also give thanks that our Father loves us so much He will not want us to remain immature and fleshly. If we are not looking to imitate the love of Christ in all we say and do then we are either unsaved or we are coasting along thinking we have arrived.

If we don't hate what we see of the world and the flesh life in us, we are happy to be in the world and have not died to self to live in Christ.

If anger, resentment, pride and self interest are not shaming us, they have not being put off in our hearts in order to put on Christ. If we are the first thought in our lives, then there is no cross of self denial and we are not following Christ. For if Christ is in us, He is all we need and the one we desire to please more than life itself. If we think we have made good progress in putting on Christ, we will be very much aware every time we think, speak or act in a way that is not like Him. Intimacy with God brings brilliant clarity of mind to the presence of the knowledge of His love, and also to our failure to love as He loves.

It is only as we see our imperfections as He does that we can repent and move closer to Him. No pain, no gain. The Christian life that is only marked by outward appearance and

claims of devotion is far from the power of God, for God works from the inside out. Religious devotion on the outside may only reveal a pile of dead men's bones on the inside. Cruisers are snoozers.

Because our Father doesn't want His children to remain immature or for anyone in the world to be lost; if the spiritual well-being of others doesn't move us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice for their support, then the Spirit of God is not working His love in us.

Everyone who is truly in Christ works together with Him for the benefit of all, in the body of Christ, the church, and also for the salvation of the world. No one is called by God to just drift along according to their own desires. We are either in Christ Jesus to do His work or we are in the world to please ourselves. God calls us to be His spiritual children following the example of Christ.

The devil offers us the easy way. So even in our Christian service, he promotes the easy

way of not taking up our cross. Instead of imitating Christ, we have the easier message of the world, that all are welcomed in the church, because our God is a God of love who accepts all who will come, no stipulations required. The lie is that there is no need to suffer with Christ, He has done it all for us.

We must guard against taking the easy comfortable way of the world. God calls on us to resist the devil and the temptation to compromise His truth in our daily lives by remaining intimate with Him by obeying His word and trusting in Him for all we need.

If we are faithful we will overcome the world by the power of His Spirit and Jesus will reward us. Jesus prayed to the Father. *"That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."*

John 17:21

Abiding in Christ is to remain in His intimate love by keeping His commandments.

Living Water Resources



Come to the River

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