

THE AUTHENTIC  
DISCIPLE OF  
JESUS CHRIST



## *The authentic disciple of Jesus Christ*

What do we know about the correct way of following Jesus Christ as God intended? What does the average Christian understand about discipleship?

There has been a tendency for two hundred years to speak of the love of God without the need for a personal cross in order to follow Jesus Christ. There has been the mistaken idea, embraced by many, that Jesus came to make life more comfortable, that Jesus came that we might have life in the world more abundantly. And that abundant life doesn't include suffering and the struggle to divest ourselves of our former life in the flesh, to put on His holiness of life as a servant of our King. Having the abundant spiritual life Jesus brings means whatever we cling to in the world, Jesus needs to break off, for we are addicted to the world; and our addiction is to be transferred to Him if He is to be our Lord.

Believers in Jesus Christ are to be His disciples who are becoming like Him. There was never any intent in Jesus' mind that people would become Christians and not take up their cross to be disciples and follow Him. But history has shown that it became the aim of many in the Church that we should get people saved as Christians and not make disciples. Impossible!!

When Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God, He called on all those who would seek life in His Kingdom to follow Him as His disciples; therefore we can conclude that all those who follow Jesus Christ are intended to be His disciples who will walk as He walk and obey His commandments as He obeyed the Father's commandment.

The whole idea of making disciples who would walk as Jesus walked in obedience to Him; teaching others all He has commanded us to teach was soon forgotten. It is one thing to declare the love of God for all men; it is entirely another to say that those who love Him will obey all His commandments if they want to receive His eternal life.

The result today is that many in the Church cannot give a sound biblical reason for their faith. They don't seem to be able to say that the repentant can believe in Jesus and be forgiven in order to receive a new life so they can walk with God in obedience and truth by following

Jesus' example. Instead, by default, the Church offers eternal life to all who will come to Church on their own terms.

For far too long the Church in many places has been more interested in pleasing the hearers by telling them what they want to hear, rather than calling people to repentance and obedience in order to live as disciples of Jesus so that they can grow up to be like Him as sons and daughters of God. The truth is, Jesus came to bring a new life with God for all who would turn from their own way to follow Him in living God's plan for the good of all humanity.

We are not saved for salvations sake, just to cleanse us from sin. Jesus came to die for our sins so that we could be cleansed in order to born again of God so that we might live with Him in eternal fellowship. *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* (John 17:3) *'But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.'* (John 1:12-13) And it is the Fathers plan that we are transformed into the image of the Son of God so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:29

### **Jesus puts a high price on following Him**

*"If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what good will it do a person if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul?"*

Matt 16:24-26

Becoming a disciple of Jesus means we must lose the life we had in the world to take up a new life in the light of the Kingdom of God. It is not possible to receive Christ and live in His Kingdom if we want to retain our life and live in the world. We cannot have two masters. (Matt 6:24) We cannot have one foot in the Kingdom of God and one in the world so that we are divided in our hearts. What fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Cor 6:14) What can the flesh add to the Spirit? *"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing."*

John 6:63

There can be no sense of becoming a Christian without counting all things as loss that we may gain Christ. Therefore the cost of the cross Jesus demands is laying down our lives and all we value in the world of

men, so we can take up all that is of value in the Kingdom of God. Becoming a disciple means our compelling love for Him we will put Him and His work before all things that once held our allegiance. Counting the cost of the cross means some hard choices need to be made, because there are many stumbling blocks in the world to hold us back.

There must be a high cost in becoming a disciple because the treasure to be gained in fellowship with Christ is beyond measure and worth everything that exists in the created order, (Matt 13:44) for the goal of the disciple is Christ Himself made alive in us who is the gift of love from our Father. The high cost of discipleship indicates the value the Lord places on the life He has called us to live, because this life He gives us is His life lived out through us so that we will be like Him. We need to be like Him to walk with God.

Therefore as disciples of Jesus who are born of God by the Spirit to obey Him in all we do, we will endeavour to be like Him who lives in us. It should then be natural that the default setting for the disciple of Jesus would be to always look to the Master as the best example of how to live in the Kingdom of God and become like Him. As a consequence, the disciples would listen intently to what the Master said and taught so they could do as He said because they loved Him and wanted to obey Him.

As a sign of their commitment the disciples who followed Jesus left everything at the request of their Master to follow Him. *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”* (Matt 16:24) In this way the disciples has no other interest concerning how to live that could distract them or divide their time and commitment to becoming just like the Master Jesus Christ.

They had left their former life to be transformed by the Master into legitimate examples of His life, so that if someone knew the Master they would be able to easily identify His disciples who are made in His image. As Jesus said *“The one who has seen Me has seen the Father.”* (John 14:9) As the Father was in the Son, so the disciple is in Christ. If we knew the Son we would know the Father, and others would see the Son in us.

## **If we are to be disciples, do we know what a Disciple is?**

A disciple is one who accepts and actively assists in spreading the teaching of the one he follows. Therefore a disciple is someone who takes up the ways of someone else of greater value.

A disciple is someone who has become alive because of God's awakening grace. Disciples have been reborn according to the divine nature. 2 Pet 1:3-4

A follower of Jesus is a disciple who learns from Him how to live like Him. So much so, that they conform their words and ways to the words and ways of Jesus. Living as a disciple of Jesus will reveal us to be reflections of Christ, as He is the first born of many brethren.

If we will follow Jesus, we worship God in the way we live for the one we love. We do this because of Jesus, because He is our Mediator, (1 Tim 2:5) and Jesus Himself is our God. John 10:30; 20:28-29

Being a Disciple of Christ means being a servant of Christ and His Church. *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you."*

John 13:14-15

Being a disciple of Jesus means we will love others as He has loved us. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."* John 13:34; 1 John 3:23

Discipleship means being a witness to Christ. *"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world."*

John 17:16-18

*"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."* John 20:21

This sending into the world means that Jesus' disciples are on a mission to carry out His plan. It means that all those we truly believe in Him are His missionaries, who are equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit to function in this world as his witnesses. Acts 1:8

Being a disciple means we are grafted into His life from where we are provided everything we need to do His work, because His love and life now flow in our bodies for His glory. (John 15:4) To be a disciple of

Jesus means our whole lives, words and deeds, are for the primary purpose of pointing people to Him.

When Jesus says "Follow Me" it means we accept the abandoning of ourselves, the world and the things of the world, to hold Him exclusively for the life we desire with God. We cannot live in Him and still live for ourselves.

Until we accept that eternal life with God reigning over us as Lord will cost us the independent life we live in the world, we will remain dead in our sins, because we will not deny ourselves and take up our cross to live for Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

We must follow Christ as He lived for God with no reservations. Eternal life has no room for life according to the standards of men in the world.

### **Discipleship is the process of God breaking us free from the world**

Jesus promised to provide what we need as we follow His example. We think what we need is certainty about our health and finances; but Jesus knows we need uncertainty so our faith will be tested in order that we will trust in Him and not the world or created things. Jesus is our daily bread and all we need to live for God. Jesus is enough for us at anytime and for everybody. Our need is for the one who has all power and wisdom, the King of kings and Lord of Lords. Because of Jesus we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Our hope is for the eternal not the temporary that is passing away. The focus for Jesus is not life in the world or the things of the world, but eternal life in fellowship with the Father and the Son.

John 17:3

*This is to be the life we walk with Christ. '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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.'*

1 John 2:15-17

Our cross is absolutely necessary if we are to be true disciples who refuse to respond to life's difficulties from the perspective of the fleshly nature of the old man. Our cross is necessary if we are to faithfully

respond to our trials in the manner of Christ who lives in us so we can be transformed into His image and likeness.

The ability to follow Christ is only possible for those who are compelled by the Holy Spirit. Any attempt to be a Christian without surrendering to the authority of the Spirit will fail. *'For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.'*  
2 Cor 5:14-15

Our cross is our hope of separation from all that is not pleasing to God. And suffering is God's way to deal with sin. Christ being our example and forerunner. Jesus is our way marker to glory. So when Jesus Christ calls us to follow Him, He makes it personal. We don't follow a religion, we don't follow an idea; we follow Him. He gets into our hearts and we get into His heart.

Jesus' concerns are the spiritual growth of His disciples who walk by faith in what is not seen, abundantly assisted by the Spirit of God. So following Christ assumes that the person has received the new birth of the divine nature and is indwelt by the Spirit of Christ in God. And the new life is dependent on having died with Christ. *'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.'*  
Gal 2:20

The abundant life Jesus offers is a spiritual life secured in the stability that belongs to God alone. The instability in the world and with people should remind us that some trials can be with us at any time. Somebody might think they hold a good hand, but God owns the deck and the table. And God deal out the hand He wants us to play with.

### **Jesus calls us to be disciples so we can be like Him**

*'For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.'*  
Rom 8:29

Jesus even taught us that His desire was that we become one with Him and the Father. *"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 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 17:20-21

God has blessed those who believe and obey His Son with eternal life in His Spirit. Only God can give life to the dead, only God can forgive sins, and only God can transform us into the image of His beloved Son. Only God can raise Himself from the dead. And only God can give the Holy Spirit for the purpose of changing us into His image.

So Jesus calls disciples who will follow Him in all obedience and truth to be like Him. His disciples are to follow His example and do what He says in exclusion to all else, so they can become like Him. *‘Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.’* 1 John 3:2

Because we have Jesus as our divine saviour, we know He chose to die in our place, and we know He Has atoned for our sins by taking our punishment upon Himself. We know He died the death we deserved so we can live His life, for we know we are born of His divine nature.

The proof of the effectiveness of Jesus as our one and only Divine Saviour and Lord is the transformation that takes place in the lives of those who surrender all to follow Him in all obedience and truth. It is not everyone who says to Him, *“Lord, Lord”* (John 7:21-23) who is born again, but only those show the evidence of His life made alive in them; for they have died to self so that they may live in newness of life as His life is made alive in them. It is these who the scripture refers to when it says *‘We will be like Him.’* 1 John 3:2

The demonstration of real faith and love is seen when we are putting our belief and commitment to Him into action. Therefore disciples need to be observant concerning the teaching of our Master, and this means what He taught will become the basis for our life as we put on His life so that that the power of God works in us so we will be like Him one glorious day.

### **We need to grow in holiness to be like Him**

Since we are to be like Him, we need to pay attention to growing in holiness. While God has given us everything we need for life and godliness, (2 Pet 1:3) we need to grow in living out that holiness. Peter

wrote to the Church, *"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behaviour; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"*

1 Peter 1:13-16

When Peter repeats the Lord's words from Leviticus, he is talking only to believers; and as believers we need to be "set apart" from the world unto the Lord because we are to be different, since God has made the difference in us.

We need to be living by God's standards, not the world's. God is calling us to be different from the world. Peter describes believers as *"a holy nation."* (1 Pet 2:9) And since all the magnificent promises of God have been fulfilled in us, and we have been separated from the world; we now need to live out that reality in our daily lives.

Holiness only results from a right relationship with God by believing in Jesus Christ as Saviour so we do all He asks of us. He has given us a new life so He can come to live in us, and He wants us to intentionally live in Him. If we are true believers, then we recognize that our position in Christ automatically sets us apart from the world. 1 Peter 2:9

Since God has done all we need to be holy children, we must live a set-apart life on a daily basis, not trying to fit in with the world, but instead living according to God's Word as we study the Bible and grow in the knowledge it gives, so that one day we will be like Him.

*'Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.'*

1 John 3:2-3

### **Following Christ is to suffer like Christ who never complained**

Jesus was content to do the will of the Father even though He lived as the suffering servant of all mankind under the providence of God.

Therefore we need to see that every disturbing, distasteful, disagreeable, disruptive situation we face in the world, either inflicted on us by nature or the hand of man, has God's loving hand working

behind the scenes to get our attention so we face our inability to control our life in a way suitable for those made in His image. With the result that we surrender to His sovereign will and power, so that we honour Him as the prime mover of all life. We do this by living according to His Holy purpose in following the teaching of Jesus as disciples under the control of the Spirit; content with the manner of all God's dealing with us in the world. And we are assured He is working for our good.

But in complaining about our circumstances we demand justice, and the repair of all our troubles. But if we got the justice we deserve we would already be toast, exactly what we often want for others.

However, even in our time of testing God's mercy is far more abundantly given than we realise. Every good thing is a messenger of mercy even while suffering we live and enjoy all kinds of simple things because of God. Therefore the person of faith is content to live humbly and gratefully under the mighty hand of God. Blessed be His name.

In the testing we experience as suffering under His preordained plan, we often make the ignorant assumption that God has abandoned us, but how could that be, when behind the scenes His loving hand is working all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose?

When we assume God has abandoned us we become indignant, forgetting we follow the example of the suffering of the Lord. So when we suffer at the hand of others we are to be merciful like Christ. *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”* Matt 5:7

*'For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.'*

1 Pet 2:21-23

Jesus Christ accepted suffering as the way to glory, and He requires that we follow Him without grumbling so we can share in His glory. Jesus said His disciples will experience opposition. If we aren't experiencing opposition and trials we may be hoeing our own row.

*'More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the*

*loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.'*

Phil 3:8-11

Either God reigns in us and over us or we look the other way.

### **The Obedience of love is the only way Jesus can live in us**

Following Christ mean living in obedience. Jesus Christ is our example of obedience. *'And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross.'*

Phil 2:8

Jesus was obedient even to God's command to die in order to willingly give up His life for others. He willingly died on the cross, and Jesus teaches us that the same obedience is need in the lives of those who follow Him. *'Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered.'*

Heb 5:8

We cannot create intimacy with God and His Son without surrender and obedience. If we love Him we will keep His commandments, and He will come to live in us. *"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."* *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.'*

John 14:21, 23-24

Therefore in order to abide in His love we need to surrender and obey all He has taught us. We need to die to self in order to live for God. The disciples testimony is, *'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.'* (Gal 2:20) *'And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.'*

Acts 5:32

His presence gives us the confidence to say, *'The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.'* 1 John 3:23-24

### **Following Jesus means we walk as Jesus walked**

*'By this we may be sure that we are in Him: he who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked.'* 1 John 2:5-6

To abide in Him, means exactly the same thing as fellowships with him. The Lord Jesus made that clear when He said, *"Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me."* (John 15:4) Jesus indicated that those who abide in His will produce the fruit of His life and walk as He walked.

Abiding in Christ is to live in Him as He lives in us. Therefore our relationship with Christ will mean we can walk as He walked. That means to act from the same principle upon which He acted, to reflect the same kind of relationship to the Father that He had.

Walking with Jesus is the sign of divine fellowship with the Father and the Son. As the Son didn't do anything on His own initiative. Jesus said, the Son of Man does not do these things of Himself. *"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in the same way."* John 5:19

So we are to do all things as a result of our attachment to Christ. We are to produce the life of Christ because we have His Spirit dwelling in us. We are in Christ so that we are available to Him, so His life can express itself through us who have denied ourselves to live for Him.

As Jesus walked in total unbroken fellowship and dependence upon the Father, we are to be absolutely dependent on Christ who dwells in us in unbroken fellowship.

It is the Son of God who lives within us, and He has come to reproduce the effect of His death and the power of His resurrection in us, and to live His life in us as part of His body the church. When we remain in faithful submission to Him, we will be reproducing the value of His life as we witness to the power of His promise to provide all we need of His life.

## **A disciples is to put on Christ**

*‘Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.’*  
Rom 13:14

The Christian life is to “*put on.*” the Christ life. The apostle Paul instructs believers to “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*” The phrase “put on Christ” means to figuratively clothe oneself with the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal the glory of God to the world. Those who are clothing themselves with the Lord Jesus are believers who do not focus on gratifying the desires of the world.

The expression “*put on Christ*” occurs again in Gal 3:27: “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” Putting on Christ is having clothed ourselves with the new nature; believers are taught “*to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*” (Eph 4:24) We put on Christ when our old ways are nailed to the cross and we wear the grace and forgiveness of Jesus as a glorious garment for the entire world to see. A disciple of Jesus carries his cross daily so that the old doesn’t interfere with the new life born of God.

This is clear in the letter Paul wrote to the church in Colossae: “*Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like Him.*” (Col 3:10 NLT) Putting on Christ means letting the Lord be our life. (Col 3:4) It means embracing Him moment by moment as we daily trust Him in faith for the life He calls us to live as His servants, in thankfulness with Joy.

To put on Christ means to let our lives be conformed to the image of Jesus. (Rom 8:29) Rather than habitually adapting ourselves to fit into the pattern of this world. We begin by offering ourselves as a living sacrifice. (Rom 12:1) And then give ourselves to be transformed by the renewing of our minds and the modification of our behaviour into the model of Christ’s life on earth.  
Rom 12:2

Putting on Christ means we are abiding in Jesus, and living only to please Him. We are clothed in Christ when we become so closely united with Jesus that others see Him and not us.

## **We are to become like our Master in His rejection**

*“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master.”* Matt 10:24

As students of Christ we are to expect the same treatment as our Teacher. *“If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they insult the members of his household!”* Matt 10:25

Identifying with Jesus as His disciple will mean many trials and tribulations, sometimes even from our own household. *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to TURN A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A PERSON’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. “The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the one who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”* Matt 10:34-38

## **Following Christ means persevering in the face of difficulties**

Jesus is the example for our perseverance. *‘And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.’* Heb 12:1-3

*‘Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.’* Heb 12:7-8

*‘And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.’*

Rom 5:2-5

*“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps”* 1 Pet 2:21

Disciples have been called to suffer. Our suffering is not the result of fate or chance, it is a vocation laid upon us by the Father. It is our only key to heavens glory.

Naturally we would not patiently endure suffering for doing what is right. We are prone to retaliate and treat others as poorly as we have been treated. But our suffering serves God’s plan. Therefore we must embrace His call to suffer and turn only to Him in our hour of need.

### **Therefore following Jesus requires a humble heart**

As disciples of Jesus Christ we should have a broken heart when we sin. But we make a small thing of our disobedience.

When was the last time we offered up a prayer of confession when we were truly heartbroken because we had offended God's holiness? Is it not the case that our prayers are nearly always purely mechanical and mean nothing? How is it that we enjoy the means of grace in the church as we follow the orthodox order of service concerning adoration and confession, but we never press our face to the floor with a broken heart?

How can we feel blessed when the blessings are for those who feel the weight of their sins clouding the glory? *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”*

Matt 5:3-4

Does our lack of a feeling of poorness and mourning mean our prayers are bouncing off the ceiling?

When we have received the blessings of God new every morning, shouldn't it prompt a humble and honest heart? Shouldn't God's blessings remind us of our former life where we ignored Him? God thinks so. *"Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations."*

Ezekiel 36:31

When we refuse to follow Christ sacrificially the way He demands and requires for all those who believe in Him, should we not experience a broken heart, because we grieve the Spirit of God, or is it okay to just mechanically shrug it off as no big deal?

## **Our path as a disciple is clear**

As disciples are told to put in Christ we should never get the idea that this is something that should be foreign to us. We have to put on what God has already accomplished in our new birth. We put on as a way of confirming what God has already worked in us. We need to work out what God has worked in us by the power of His Spirit. Phil 2:12-14

Putting on Christ is our way of continual worshiping and giving glory to God who now lives in us who no longer live for the world. The person of faith can, and will delight in putting on Christ and make no provision for the flesh, especially under pressure from the world. No provision is given to satisfying self interest, no opportunity is allowed through a lack of faith, no devotion is neglected by attachment to the world, or by stubborn disobedience. No provision means in no way will we refuse the glory of God to be seen in us who are in Christ. If we aren't putting off self to put on Christ we have substituted our walk with Jesus for a religious idea for our own liking.

Putting on Christ will mean we will be passionate about calling His chosen people to live for Him. It will mean we will work for the vital holiness of His body the church. It will mean we will love one another as He loves us. Putting on Christ is the solid evidence we have been joined in eternal relationship with the King of glory and no longer live to please ourselves. Putting on Christ is the dear that pants for water as our soul longs to be more fully clothed in Christ.

To hear Jesus say "*follow Me*" means we understand we are dead to self and the world. We are crucified with Him and made alive in Him to the glory of God. Following Christ is what the living do; the dead bury their own dead. Those who follow Jesus are living in absolute surrender to the control of God.

But natural man has a blind need for control. Because natural man is alienated from God he is insecure. He might like to think he can control his world, but deep down he knows he can't even control himself. The more he is made aware of his vulnerability, the more he attempts to exert control over the environment and others. Take Pharaoh for instance. Natural man might think he has a good hand at the card table, but God owns the deck, and God stands over the table which He made with the sound of His voice.

Natural man is driven by the fear of uncertainty which produces a heightened need to be in control which alienates others. Controlling behaviour exposes our hidden fear and vulnerability. When we want to exert control over others so we have things our way, we are insensitive to the legitimate needs of others as prescribed by God. And an overly controlling spirit tends to be dictatorial and overbearing, and increasing in anger if opposed.

God knows everyone's hidden hotspots that will reveal their deepest fear and anxiety. In His divine wisdom He uses people and events to press these hotspots, which in turn, can provoke unrestrained hostility and inordinate need for control. The very reactions He uses to show us the need for humble surrender to His sovereign reign and control.

The only cure for this inbuilt fear of not being in control is to make ourselves vulnerable to walk by faith with God. We can only do this by the Holy Spirit and taking up our cross to follow Jesus Christ, so the natural man is put to death with Christ. We can only love others when we abide in the love of Jesus Christ who loves us enough to die for us.

When we are confronted with the controlling behaviour of others as Jesus was, we are to refuse to respond as we did before in the days of our flesh, but live as those who belong to Jesus and instead walk as Jesus walked. *“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”* Matt 7:12

The whole of life in the darkness of the world is a continuous test of faith to prove or deny our commitment to trusting in God as disciples of Jesus. For in every situation we can lay down our lives for Him who died for us, always giving thanks in all things as ordained by God, and for the joy of living for Jesus Christ in the security of His eternal love.

### **The question is, are we walking with Christ?**

The good news is only good to those who will die to self. Do we have the good news or the fake news? Can the world see we have died to self to live for Christ because we serve Him only; or do they see a good person of the world like themselves? Do we fit comfortably into the world, or do people see us as some strange dude who is hard to understand because of our preoccupation with following Christ?

Disciples who love Jesus Christ enough will want people to know the truth of Christ so they too can be set free from self induced fear and blindness to follow Him.

Divinely ordained discipleship means God is in control. He set the rules for everyone and He alone keeps the score. We live by His rules or we don't get a pass mark. If we are not regularly confronted by the Holy Spirit with our failures in holiness to measure up to what God requires of His children, and we as a result aren't putting off the old man who has taken God's place, we are not putting on Christ who fulfils God's every requirement. We can't claim to be putting on Christ if we are not actively putting our self interest to death.

Disciples have to realise there aren't any little sins that are no big deal. Every sin causes great harm to someone, be it ourselves or most often others. All failure to live holy lives on God's terms of discipleship, fails the test of authentic Christianity and divine holiness. All sin is a big deal.

God considers improper controlling anger a punishable sin, just as He considers murder a transgression of His will. *"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."*

Matt 5:22

Every sin, no matter how small we want to see them, is in direct defiance to God's Holy authenticity and His right to be God. And the wages, the cost of the consequence of sin, means someone dies. Every sin is a death sentence. Either Christ dies in our place or the sinner perishes by their own hands.

Unless we are authentic God does not hear our prayers. The authentic are the righteous ones whose prayers are of value. (James 5:26) They are effective because God hears the prayers of those who are committed to letting God be God. So when we are authentic, God is faithful and covers our sin. *'If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'*

1 John 1:8-9

## **The disciples cross builds a heart of faith and contentment**

The controlling spirit of the unrepentant heart is unable to be an authentic humble disciple who serves God and not themselves. Even if our controlling ways appear to be passive, the test is always compliance to the life of Christ. If Christ is not our life we are putting ourselves first and playing by our own rules, and we fail the test of faithfulness. If we are not laying down our lives for Christ we will never be contented in a fallen world.

Discipleship with Jesus Christ is the only way we can be set free from the curse of controlling sin that belongs to our natural man. Discipleship is God's provision for our holiness in order that we can live acceptably before God. God uses evil for our God when we faithfully follow Christ. God uses the disturbing to give us peace. He uses hardship to train us in contentment.

The test of our progress in holiness is in the way we respond to the darkness of the world's every disagreeable disruptive situation and the person God allows for our testing. The authentic life of a disciple under Jesus Christ's control responds as Christ would, and this is the only way we can pass the test. In discipleship God calls on us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice for our own good. Rom 12:1-2

It's time to ditch the fake news that offers eternal life without death to self, and strive to be a good disciple who is putting on Jesus Christ daily; the One who is the only true seal of authentic life in the presence of God.

Nothing earthly is able to fully satisfy someone born if the divine Spirit of God. Only Christ can satisfy. *"In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."* Psalm 16:11

**Pray:** *"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."* Eph 3:16-19

# Living Water Resources

## Come to the River

**The authentic  
disciple of  
Jesus Christ**



*'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.'*

Gal 2:20

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