



**Christadelphian
Bible Mission**

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Lesson 15

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP (1)

Learning to follow the Lord Jesus Christ is above all a matter of loyalty. Those who wish to be disciples must realise that they need forgiveness. By our nature, we are related to sin and to death by being descendants of Adam and Eve. Sin is just like a master who rules our life.

“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16)

However, we can, by God’s grace, become slaves under the best of masters.

“Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and your members (parts of your body) to God as instruments for righteousness.” (Romans 6:13)

Baptism is a symbolic death, and we arise from the water new creatures in God’s sight. We turn away from our old self-centred way of life, to begin a new life in Christ, who is now not only our Saviour but also our Master. We, as new creatures, owe our loyalty to him:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.” (Mark 8:34, 35)

Commitment to Christ

Baptism is the most important step anyone can ever take in life; more important than commitment to any other person or cause, however good and worthwhile that cause might be. Service to the Lord Jesus Christ is demanding; it is a service of total commitment. We are not simply isolated members. Wherever we live we become members of the body of Christ - a worldwide community of those who believe in “the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12).

This community is spoken of as God’s ‘house’. Those who are parts of that spiritual building are men and women who are guided by the mind of the Spirit and no longer by the mind of the ‘flesh’, or the natural man: *“To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace”* (Romans 8:6).

We are called to separation from the concerns of the world, which are so often to do with social, economic and political ambition - *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? . . . for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple”* (1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

Jesus Christ Himself is the corner-stone of this temple, which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. In the midst of so much insecurity, uncertainty and unrest, the knowledge of godly things brings a sense of peace which is beyond everything in this life. By commitment to our new Master we become part of those things which are eternal. Because of this we lift our sights above those things in life that have no lasting value. Paul writes:

“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:2,3)

Resisting the old self

Sadly, of course, our human nature is always trying to take control of us. Our old ‘self’ tries to keep influencing our hearts and minds. Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are spiritual soldiers. The battlefield is within each one of us.

“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits—since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.” (2 Timothy 2:3,4)

It is so easy to be drawn back into our old self-centred way of life. It is just like a magnet attracting us and we feel pulled towards all those things which we have left behind. So how do we resist and combat these things?

First of all we can keep the things of God at the centre of our lives. Secondly, we can stay away as far away from those old attractions that stop our progress.

Prayer

Prayer can help us a great deal. What does this mean in practice? It means first that we listen to God. We do this when we read His word. Then we open our minds to God to praise Him, thank Him, focus on His Son and His coming Kingdom. We pray for the welfare of others and share our problems with Him.

Disciples are now men and women who can call upon God at any time, as His children. They can speak to Him as “Our Father”. This is the most reassuring promise we have, because it means that *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

We can and must always and often pray, then we will not grow weary.

“I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” (Luke 11:9)

The Word of God

We get great help from the word of God. We are exposed to many media but there is only one life-giving source of refreshment for the heart and mind, and that is the Bible. It is so easy to feed the mind on things we naturally like—but some things we can read or look at are harmful to our spiritual well-being. We do best when we feed upon the word of God:

“Like newborn babies, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into your salvation.” (1 Peter 2:2)

“The Spirit gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” (John 6:63)

Yes, the word of God is our sword of the Spirit. It helps us to fight off temptations to do wrong (Hebrews 4:12). It can transform our outlook so that we can please God more.

Shared faith

Disciples also receive great strength and encouragement from being with those who share their faith. This is why it is so important that we should stay in contact with each other and meet together when we can.

This meeting together is not just a social occasion. It is an expression of our fellowship in Christ. Malachi, the Old Testament prophet, said: *“Those who feared the Lord spoke with one another . . .”* (Malachi 3:16)

Jesus Himself, when speaking of that most solemn time when disciples meet together to remember His sacrifice and resurrection, said: *“I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer . . . Do this in remembrance of me.”* (Luke 22:15-20)

When we meet together it is an opportunity for *“encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25).

In all these ways the Lord has provided a rich supply of encouragement, guidance and example for those who commit themselves to his service and make it their first aim in life to follow him.

Questions

P1. What is the difference between the ‘old self’ and the ‘new self’?

P2. How do we show our loyalty to Jesus in our everyday life?