

## True discipleship

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### Basics

So you have become a christian – you have accepted that you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, you have also trusted that God in his love sent his son – Jesus to die for your sins that you may be redeemed. You have accepted the Good news with joy and have received the Holy Spirit of promise and you have become baptised in water to symbolise having died and resurrected with Jesus. As a reminder, from previous lessons, some of the [basic steps we list to salvation](#) are this:

1. [Understand what it means to fear God](#)
2. [Become a Christian](#)
3. [Learn about the bible and how to read it](#)
4. [Learn how to pray \(better\)](#)

Where we often stop.

In our generation today, it would seem that the next steps after that all important altar call are sometimes not made clear. Becoming a child of God has privileges but it also has responsibilities.

### Examples from the bible

After you become a Christian, the reason step 3 above is very important (reading the bible) is because it is here that you find the “operating manual” after getting your “new model car” (your new life in Christ). Some of the core principles on discipleship highlighted there are:

#### **1. Take up your cross every day to follow him.**

Discipleship is not a matter of Sunday or whenever you are around other Christians. It is a daily walk, one **where you surrender your life to Jesus and are willing to die for him daily**<sup>i</sup>. Jesus says so as follows:

“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 will find it.”<sup>ii</sup>

#### **2. On your own you can do nothing**

After taking up your cross, Jesus wants you to remain “plugged into him”. He uses the analogy of a tree (vine). Can the branches (or leaves) bear fruit in a tree without being connected to the stem and roots? He expects that to be fruitful you must remain in him. He summarises it as follows:

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”<sup>iii</sup>

#### **3. His load is light – he helps you.**

Jesus is a great master, he helps you carry your load (perhaps your cross). He says so as follows: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”<sup>iv</sup>



## Today's perspective

### **A marathon...**

It seems some in our generation have forgotten that just because you have started the race (becoming a Christian) doesn't mean you will finish it and win the prize (eternal life). True discipleship means running faithfully until the end. The Apostle Paul says it clearly:

**“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run [their very best to win], but only one receives the prize? Run [your race] in such a way that you may seize the prize and make it yours!”<sup>v</sup>**

Paul is making it clear that Christianity is like a race (a marathon) – we all start but some make false starts so they get disqualified, others along the track fall and still others finish but not winning. Only 1 wins gold. This is where the concept of perseverance comes in.

### **I am saved so it's okay to continue in this [bad] habit...**

Christians who become saved BUT continue as a “practice” (something they do as a matter of lifestyle) to do the very same things they were saved from are at risk. The bible says the following about such:

**“Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were...”<sup>vi</sup>**

It is often clear to us from the bible that those who do evil will not inherit the kingdom but the Apostle Paul adds – “Neither (meaning in addition) ...” as he lists people who practice these things will ALSO not inherit it. This as you can see includes a Christian who continues to practice these things, so we need to be careful! Please note, sinning and repenting of something is not the same as practicing it daily or regularly – as a life style.

### **Following the great commission...**

Finally, in our generation we seem to have forgotten what Jesus instructed us just before he went to heaven in what is called “the Great Commission”: Then Jesus came to them and said, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”<sup>vii</sup>**

A true disciple obeys their teacher in all things – not some things [as suits them]. Have you told others about your faith? Have you become baptised? Have you taught them to obey everything (not some things) Jesus said and taught? If you don't follow everything, do you think you will hear him say: **“Well done, good and faithful servant!”<sup>viii</sup>**

## How I do it...

When I became a Christian, I got baptised on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2017. I then started at the beginning.

I [downloaded a bible app](#) . I then using the bible app found a “bible in one year” plan so I could pace my reading.

In reading the bible for myself, I followed the advice from an old school friend pastor friend of mine when I asked him about bible school. He told me: *“Leave other things for the moment, start reading the bible for yourself, let the Holy Spirit himself be your teacher”*. His advice was excellent. In reading the entire bible (it did take me one year). I have learnt a number of things such as:

- **Old Testament gems.** The Old Testament really surprised me. I had while younger wondered if God is cruel and kills thousands of innocent people. When I read the full picture (for example in the book of Jeremiah), I was moved to tears. God is merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands and forgiving.<sup>ix</sup>
- **Full context/discernment.** I also could see the full context of verses that are often quoted by preachers and so learnt how to discern false teachings/doctrines.
- **Personal revelations.** I have got confirmations from God to me for my personal life from reading the bible (the Bible being alive and used by the Holy Spirit).
- **Time to develop and change mind-set.** There are some things that just can't be preached in the limited time of a Sunday church service but as you read slowly you can meditate (think of, ponder, analyse) on the Word of God and pray as you read. When I started, I really had some rebellious streaks or thoughts in me – “Why should I lift my voice to praise God?” “Should I be humble”. I have not of course attained perfection but I am not where I used to be and I thank God – I am simply leaving old things behind and **“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”**<sup>x</sup> Be blessed.

## Your turn

What will you now do differently? Examples to think about include:

- How will ensure you read the bible as part of your life style as a disciple of Christ?
- What practices do you need to stop doing or what new practices will you start doing as a “good and faithful servant”?

Write here

## Notes

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/take-up-your-cross.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 16: 24 – 26 (ESV)

<sup>iii</sup> John 15: 5 (NIV)

<sup>iv</sup> Matthew 11: 28 – 30 (NIV)

<sup>v</sup> 1 Corinthians 9: 24 (AMP)

<sup>vi</sup> 1 Corinthians 6: 9 – 11 (NIV)

<sup>vii</sup> Matthew 28: 18 – 20 (NIV)

<sup>viii</sup> Matthew 25: 23 (NIV)

<sup>ix</sup> Exodus 34: 5 - 7

<sup>x</sup> Philippians 3: 14 (KJV)