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## Days To Victory

Stewardship Enrichment Devotionals

Week 1

## A Christian is a Disciple - Part I

Day 1, Sunday, September 16

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul  
and with all your strength and with all your mind; and,  
Love your neighbor as yourself.”  
Luke 10:27*

We speak today of “Christ’s disciples.” Most of us could recall the names of many of the original twelve disciples who followed Jesus throughout His ministry, but I doubt that many could give a job description of the “calling.”

The disciples came from varied backgrounds, possessed differing personalities, and exhibited varying temperaments. They differed from one another and even with one another, yet we are Christians today because of their faithfulness. They obeyed His command to “go into all the world and make disciples.” (Matthew 28:19) We are Christians today because of their obedience – their discipleship.

“Disciple.” What a wonderful and meaningful name for those of us who follow Christ today and bear His name. The term literally means “a learner”, “a pupil”, “a student” of a teacher – in this case of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.” (Matthew 11:29) This is a continuing process. It begins when one says, “yes” to Jesus’ invitation to salvation, and continues into glory.

What then are we to learn of Christ?

### 1. **To love as He loved.**

He was the embodiment of love – the love of God in human form. This is what John 3:16 means, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son.” It is what Jesus meant when He said, “Greater love has no man that this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

He made the supreme demonstration of this love when He went to the cross of Calvary and gave His life in love. Paul interprets this for us in Romans 5:8 – “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Charles Wesley, a leader of the Methodist church, wrote this wonderful hymn to express his love for the one who loved him enough to die for him:

*O for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer’s praise,  
The glories of my God and King,  
The triumphs of his grace!*

As His disciples we can learn to love Him and others as He loves us. In John 13:34-35, Jesus our Teacher says:

*“A new commandment I give you: Love one another.  
As I have loved you, so you must love one another.  
By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

In other words, if we experience this love we can express this love to those around us. It is the major distinguishing characteristic of a Christian. Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35) He didn’t say by our words, nor by our works, nor by our attendance at church, but by our love will the world know we are Christians.

He loved the unlovely, the down and out, the up and out, the diseased, the corrupt, the rich, the poor, and everyone in between. In turn, we can love these and one another just as Jesus loved. We can learn to love as Jesus loved.

The Scripture says that He “loved the church and gave himself for it.” We, too, can learn from Him to love the church and show it in our worship, our service, our support and our sacrifice.

Our Stewardship Enrichment Capital Campaign emphasis is a manifestation of this love. A natural manifestation of our love for God is using all the gifts He has given us, including the facilities and services of our church, to reach out in His love and minister to others.

Our sacrificial giving is because of our love for Him and for those He loves.

*Lord, I love you and look forward to walking with you  
on this journey of stewardship. Thank you for allowing me to be here!*

## A Christian Is a Disciple - Part II

Day 2, Monday, September 10

### 2. We can learn to give as Jesus gave.

In His own words, Jesus taught us to give our lives as He did. He said that He had come to do the will of the Father who sent Him, and to complete the work that He sent Him to do. (John 4:34 – paraphrased). Then Jesus said, “I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me.”

In other words Jesus is saying, “My life is a life of service to the Father. My purpose is to do His will.”

As a result of this, He agonized in Gethsemane crying out, “not my will, but Thy will be done.” And then giving “His life a ransom” (Matthew 20:28) on Calvary’s cross.

Today we will probably never be called upon to die for our faith, but we are called upon to give ourselves completely to do God’s will even as Jesus did. It means that we “offer our bodies as living sacrifices” in complete surrender. (Romans 12:1-2)

Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, even so do I send you.” He sends us to give our time, talent, testimony and treasure to bring others to God.

One of the most beautiful illustrations of this is seen in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. He is challenging them to give sacrificially and he reminds them of the example of the Savior – “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might be rich.” (II Corinthians 8:9)

But He also reminds them of the Christians in Macedonia. When given an opportunity, they gave sacrificially even in the midst of their extreme poverty. They were able to do so because they “first gave themselves to the Lord.” They learned this from the Savior and so can we.

### 3. We can learn to sacrifice as He sacrificed.

It may surprise you to know that Jesus never used the word “sacrifice” in regard to His life or His ministry. He didn’t need to! His entire life was a sacrifice. His death on the cross was the ultimate sacrifice.

The writers of the New Testament, however, constantly referred to His sacrifice. In Ephesians 5:2 Paul exhorts us to “walk in love as Christ also loved us, giving Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God.” The writer of Hebrews says that Christ, “put away our sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Hebrews 9:26)

As His disciples we are called upon to “offer ourselves as living sacrifices.” Our time, our talent, our treasure can be offered to Him as sacrifices which are acceptable to Him.

An illustration of this is seen in the Apostle Paul’s giving thanks for the offering sent to him by the Philippians. He says that their monetary gift was a “sacrifice acceptable and well

pleasing to God.” (Philippians 4:18) They had made a sacrifice to the work of Christ and Paul rejoiced in it. He then promised, “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19) God always meets our needs when we, like Christ, offer to Him the sacrifice of self and substance.

When God is leading us to sacrifice time and treasure, remember the Scripture, “Don’t forget to do good and to share with others, for such sacrifices God is pleased.” (Hebrews 13:16)

In fact, on our journey of stewardship we will have opportunities to love as He loved, to give as He gave, and to sacrifice as He sacrificed. We can begin praying that we might have “willing hearts” filled with love for our Christ, our church, and our stewardship journey.

*Lord, help me to be a giver.  
I want to be used for your purpose.  
I open my heart that is filled with love for you.  
Lead me to understand what you want to do through me.  
I’ll do it.*

## A Christian Is a Follower - Part I

Day 3, Tuesday, September 11

### *Mark 2:14-15*

The simplest definition of a Christian is “one who follows Christ.” Think of what it meant to those early disciples. Their lives were changed completely and permanently. It was the opportunity of a lifetime for them.

And so it is for us today. Jesus calls each of us saying, “Follow me.”

We often fail to consider, however, what is involved in following Jesus – what demands He makes on us who would follow Him!

#### **1. To follow Jesus we must consider the cross as well as the crown.**

The cost of following Christ has not changed. Jesus warned “would be” followers to first evaluate the involvement. In Luke 14:27-33 Jesus said, “Whoever does not bear his cross and come follow me, cannot be my disciple.” He pointed out that no one starts to build a tower without counting the cost, and no king would go to war without counting the cost. He then concludes saying, “Any of you who does not give up everything, he cannot be my disciple.” (verse 33) He was saying, “count the cost!”

- It cost Andrew and Peter their fishing business to follow Jesus.
  - It cost James and John their livelihood to follow Jesus.
    - It cost Matthew his lucrative tax business to follow Jesus.

He promised those who followed Him that they would have a new life – one of fellowship with the Father. They would have an abundant overflowing life with Him. He promised they would have an eternity in heaven and a crown of victory and rejoicing.

This is all true, but we forget sometimes that he also told them of the difficulties they would face. He promised them they would be despised and persecuted. “People will insult you and hurt you. They will lie and say all kinds of evil things about you, because you follow me. But when they do you will be happy. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven.” (Matthew 5:11)

#### **2. To follow Jesus means to follow Him completely, not partially.**

When you started following Christ your life changed. Robert Munger, author, describes the change this way, “He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. He built a fire in the cold hearth and banished the chill. He started music where there had been stillness, and harmony where there had been discord. He filled the emptiness with His own loving fellowship. I have never regretted opening the door to Christ, and I never will.”

But then perhaps something happened. You began to reserve areas of your life where you didn’t want interference. You began to pick and choose what you would and wouldn’t do in your spiritual life.

My friend, Jane, once shared she had been leaving Jesus on the sidewalk everyday as she entered the building to her corporate job. She felt that her job was so stressful that she needed to protect Jesus from the chaos - that He was so good and loving that He couldn’t possibly

survive in her corporate environment! When Jane realized what she was doing, she was astonished and embarrassed, but she immediately invited Jesus into all areas of her life. And what a difference it made!

Christ doesn't demand obedience in the Christian life and use force to achieve it. He lovingly asks for it. Your life changes when you follow Christ.

To follow Jesus at all is to follow Him completely!

A wonderful song called Dive, performed by Steven Curtis Chapman, captures the passion of an arms-wide-open acceptance to Jesus' invitation...

*There is a supernatural power in this mighty river's flow  
It can bring the dead to life, and it can fill an empty soul  
And give a heart the only thing worth living and worth dying for,  
But we will never know the awesome power of the grace of God  
Until we let ourselves get swept away into this holy flood  
So if you'll take my hand, we'll close our eyes and count to three  
And take the leap of faith. Come on let's go!*

*I'm diving in, I'm going deep in over my head, I want to be  
Caught in the rush, lost in the flow, in over my head, I want to go  
The river's deep, the river's wide, the river's water is alive  
So sink or swim, I'm diving in!*

***Lord, I will follow you with all my heart and strength,  
and I will find joy in the journey.***

## **A Christian Is a Follower - Part II**

**Day 4, Wednesday, September 12**

*Luke 9:57-62*

We all know that to follow Jesus can be demanding and costly. We also know that to follow Jesus completely is rewarding. We forget sometimes that to follow Him touches all of our life.

In yesterday's devotional, we saw that to follow Christ means bearing a cross as well as wearing a crown. We saw that it meant complete surrender to Christ and not partial. There is still more involved however. Consider the following:

### **3. To follow Jesus means to follow Him in works as well as words.**

Long ago Jesus shared in a parable, "Why do you call me Lord and do not do the things I say?" (Luke 6:46) Then, as now, there are those who "talked the talk, but didn't walk the walk." Now to call Jesus "Lord" sounds good, but if it's only words not supported by works, then it's hypocritical.

In Texas, there is a saying, "He's all hat and no cattle." It is used to describe a man who talks a good game, but the words are empty. Know anyone like that?

James in his epistle talked about those who "said they had faith" but nothing in their lives revealed their faith. All words and no works. (James 2:14)

We are invited to follow the example of Christ in the Upper Room. With a towel and a bowl of water, He who was their Lord washed the disciples' feet as a slave or servant would have done. He then said, "I have given you an example that you do as I have done." (John 13:13)

Let's wear an apron and not always a bib. Let's feed and not always be fed. Let's serve and not always be served. Let's support and not always be supported. Let's be the caring and not always the cared for. Let's teach and not always be the taught. Let's be the answer, not the problem. We are the servants of Christ. Let's see the need and meet it.

A Louisiana Cajun put his mule up for sale. A prospective buyer asked, "Are there any problems with the mule?" The Cajun answered, "Only that he don't look so good." The man answered, "Well, I don't really care about that. Does he work hard?" "Oh, yea, he work hard, he just don't look so good." So the man bought the mule, and the Cajun loaded him onto the new owner's trailer.

When he arrived at his farm, he put down the ramp and brought the mule off the trailer. The mule immediately ran into a tree, then into the side of the barn. The farmer cried angrily, "I've been cheated! This mule is blind!" He reloaded the mule onto the trailer went back to the original owner, and loudly exclaimed, "You misrepresented this mule to me. This mule is blind. You lied to me!" "Oh no," the Cajun replied, "I don't lie to you, I tol' you, 'He don't look so good!'"

On the other hand there are those who look great. They give a perfect picture of a follower of Christ, but are blind to real needs about them and therefore do nothing to meet the needs. They don't "look so good."

Sometimes...

- we fail to see the needs of the homeless.
- we fail to see those about us who need Christ and the church.
- we are blinded to the God given vision of the congregation.
- our eyes are closed to the building needs of the church and we make no financial sacrifices to meet the opportunities at hand.

Oh but the joy of seeing as Christ sees, and doing as He would! How exciting it is to follow in His steps and to do His will for our lives.

And it is still true that the world is more concerned with our deeds than our words. The following was written about preachers, but it applies to all of us:

*I'd rather see a sermon  
Than hear one any day;  
I'd rather one walk with me  
Than merely show the way.  
- Author Unknown*

*Lord, on our walk together help me to work as I walk.*

## A Christian Is a Follower - Part III

Day 5, Thursday, September 13

### 4. To follow Jesus means we follow today.

If we are to follow Jesus, now is the time! Long ago Joshua challenged God's people saying, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." (Joshua 24:15) And the people of God in great faith and commitment said, "We will serve the Lord." (verse 21)

This is the response Jesus expected when He said to those of His day, "Follow Me!" The response was immediate and sacrificial.

It's amazing how we excuse ourselves, and the excuses we give. For example, here are some excuses a high school principal received...

- "Please excuse my son's tardiness. I forgot to wake him up, and I did not find him until I started making the beds."
- "Please excuse Mary for being absent. She was sick and I had her shot."
- "My son is under doctor's care and should not take P.E. today. Please excuse him."
- "Please excuse Harriet for missing school yesterday. We forgot to get the Sunday paper off the porch, and when we found it Monday, we thought it was Sunday."

We may smile at these, but we are just as creative in our excuses at times. So were some others in the New Testament. There were those to whom Jesus said, "Follow Me" and they said...

- "Lord, let me first say farewell to those of my house." (Luke 9:61)
- "I have bought a piece of ground." (Luke 14:18)
- "I have bought five yoke of oxen." (Luke 14:19)
- "I have married a wife." (Luke 14:20)

Jesus excused none of these. As someone once wrote, "The best time to do something significant is between yesterday and tomorrow."

T.N.T. is not a television channel or a high-powered explosive. It means **Today Not Tomorrow!** For us it means to seize the moment! Follow Christ and enjoy the best of life! Our future would be assured if we did as much today as we expect to do tomorrow.

Let's do it today! Whether it be going, giving, serving, sacrificing, obeying, committing or all of the above.

*Lord, today is the day you have made. I will rejoice and be glad in it,  
and I will obey, go, give, serve, and willingly sacrifice for you.*

## The Anatomy of a Christian Steward

Day 6, Friday, September 14

We have looked at The Christian Life for the past five devotionals. Now let us look at The Anatomy of a Christian. Each of us has a “body” and the Bible has much to say concerning it. Consider today:

### A Body That Belongs

#### *Romans 12:1*

In Romans 12:1 Paul says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your act of worship.”

Our bodies come from God. We are reminded of this in I Corinthians 6:19-20, “You are not your own for you are bought with a price.” Our bodies belong to Christ because He paid the price by his sacrifice on the cross.

This relationship to Christ dominates and determines (or should) our attitude, action and availability for service. This is where “the rubber hits the road”. It is where our relationship is revealed.

Since we belong to Him, our bodies – which here means our entire being of body, soul and spirit; the entire person – is to be presented to Him as a “living sacrifice.” Someone once said, “We may die in a moment of time, but to live for Him will require a lifetime” – a lifetime of service and sacrifice.

Our problem may be like that of the little boy who heard the preacher ask, “What can we do for God? He even gave His Son for us.” The spoke up saying, “I’ll be happy to give my little sister!” Our idea of sacrifice is for someone else to make it.

The verse from Romans gives three characteristics of our commitment to Christ. To be “a living sacrifice”, the Holy Spirit says our bodies (our life) must be:

Holy – This word scares many Christians, who picture some “Holy One” in a white robe, living in seclusion. Actually the word means to be set apart for God’s use, much as a vessel in the Temple was set apart for divine use.

When you became a Christian you were set apart for God’s use. You were saved to serve.

Acceptable – It means approved by God – well pleasing to Him. Concerning Jesus, God the Father said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Our goal in life is to be like Jesus – well pleasing to the Father.

A visitor to a children’s home in Ashville, North Carolina was trying to stress the importance of practicing safety measures. He told the children that in New York they placed signs everywhere with the slogan, “Safety First.” One little

fellow jumped up and said, “Down here we put God first!” So should we. This is the meaning of our being “well pleasing” and “acceptable” to our Savior.

Reasonable – The word means “logical” and/or “spiritual”. It is only logical that when one has given himself in complete surrender, set apart for God’s service and well pleasing to Him, certain things follow. We can seek His will and be ready to act.

Dr. Stephen Olford, preacher, teacher, and writer, reminds us: “Who among us does not long to live a life of fruitfulness, joyfulness, usefulness and thankfulness?” But Paul maintains this cannot happen, and will not happen, until we know how to give, not only of ourselves and our service but also of our substance.

Indeed, the more we have studied this subject, the more it has become apparent that the true measure of yielding to Christ is the measure of our discipline and devotion in Christian stewardship. We can talk until doomsday about being surrendered Christians, but it is just words until we give evidence of our surrender through our stewardship. It is inescapably true that “what we spend, we lose; what we keep will be left to others; what we give will remain forever ours.”

During this time of Stewardship Enrichment, our bodies can be used like that of:

- Moses who raised the money to build and furnish the tabernacle.
- David who raised the money and materials to build the Temple.
- Solomon who directed the building of the Temple.
- Nehemiah who supervised the rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem.
- Paul who raised money for the Saints in Jerusalem.

*Lord, I love you more each day, and want to serve you better each day.*

## The Anatomy of a Christian Steward

### A Body that Surrenders

**Day 7, Saturday, September 15**

#### *Romans 12:2*

Think of it! God is pleading with us to yield ourselves – to give ourselves as living sacrifices. “...This body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit...” (I Corinthians 6:19-20) Could anything be more amazing and empowering?

Now that we are His – have given ourselves in complete surrender – He tells what His expectations are of us. We are here to do His will, and as we are told in Romans 8:29-30, to be “conformed to the image of His Son” – to be like Jesus.

In order for this to happen, there are two things that must take place...

**First, we are exhorted not to be “conformed to the image of this world.”** Look about you. What is the “world” like? On every side we see the mad pursuit of the dollar, indifference to anything spiritual, lusting after the flesh and any sexual perversion that mind can imagine. This is our world.

The phrase that is used “don’t be conformed to this world” means “don’t let the world squeeze or pressure you into its mold.” How often do you hear “everyone else is doing it”? This is the “world” trying to force you into its way of thinking and acting. Refuse it!

Don’t let the “world” set your standard of conduct. You have a higher calling – “looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:2) Keep your eyes on Him.

**Second, we are told to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind.”** The picture is that of the transformation of an ugly caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly. It is the same root word as “metamorphous”, or a complete change.

The Holy Spirit dwells in each Christian, but it is the Spirit, and not the Christian, who makes this change or transformation possible. All the memories, the habits, the desires, the ways of the world are changed from the old to the new. The new person emerges. Love takes the place of hatred. Generosity replaces selfishness. Peace replaces turmoil. God’s will replaces our will.

In today’s world, Madison Avenue is constantly bombarding us with commercials urging us to do this or that to improve our outward beauty. Every hour products are promoted that are guaranteed to make one a “beautiful person.” Their concern is that we all physically conform to a pre-conceived ideal.

Of major importance for the Christian, however, is that one be “transformed” into the image of Christ. It is this inner beauty that concerns God.

The purpose is that we might “prove” or “test” what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Think on this. The Holy Spirit is saying that you can “learn from your own experience that His ways will really satisfy you.” (Living New Testament)

Consider those through the centuries who have tested God's purpose and found it to be glorious. Abraham found it to be so. Moses experienced it in his life. Isaiah discovered it. So did Stephen, Paul, Mark, John and the others in the Scriptures. So can you!

For twelve years Dr. R. Trevis Otey served as a trustee on the Board of the largest foreign mission organization in the world. Every volunteer who was to be appointed and sent to a foreign field of service was required to write and then verbally give his or her testimony. Time after time Dr. Otey heard them say, "I had 'planned' to be a doctor, lawyer, teacher, etc. And then God 'called' me to serve Him this way. I struggled, denied and even refused His calling. It was only when I said 'yes' and surrendered to do His will that I came to know real joy, happiness and peace."

Many times Dr. Otey saw the missionaries when they returned on furlough or he visited them in their field of service. In every case, the missionaries would say something similar to this – "I have learned from experience that God's will is the only way to happiness. His way is the only way to satisfaction."

It stands the test and is proof to us and to others. It is proof that His will is "good". His will is always good – not always easy, but always good. It is "acceptable". Since it is God's will (not ours), we cannot do less than accept it. His will is "perfect" in that it achieves the desired end – what life is intended to be.

We will discover this in coming days as we seek to know His will in our giving. He may lead us to do what is beyond our apparent means – a real sacrifice, but we'll come to see that it is His will – good, acceptable and perfect.

This is where sacrifice becomes a reality. It is when real happiness and peace is experienced. It is what God intended us to be and do.

Think about it! When your body becomes a "living sacrifice" all is blessed:

- The life is blessed by lifting it to an elevated plane of God's grace.
- The heart is blessed by making it receptive to God's will.
- The hands are blessed by making them willing to do God's work.
- The mind is blessed by giving it the satisfaction of achieving God's purpose.
- The eyes are blessed by seeing God's work done.
- The ears are blessed by hearing the Savior say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."
- The church is blessed because you have done God's will!
- God is blessed because His children have honored Him.

*Lord, help me to be a living sacrifice.*