

who share their faith. This is why it is so important that we should meet together as often as is possible.

This meeting together is no mere social occasion. It is an expression of our fellowship in Christ. Malachi, the Old Testament prophet, said:

“Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other . . .” (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 eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer . . . do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:15-20)

We are also told not to “give up meeting together . . . but let us encourage 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 I show my loyalty to Jesus in my everyday life?



Christadelphian Bible Mission

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Lesson 15

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP (1)

Learning to follow the Lord Jesus Christ is above all a matter of loyalty.

First, those who would 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.

“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16)

This chapter shows us that we can, by God’s grace, become slaves under the best of masters.

“. . . offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of 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 Lord. We, as new creatures, owe our loyalty to Him.

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” (Mark 8:34,35)

Commitment to Christ

Discipleship is therefore not to be undertaken lightly. It 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. It is a

call to become a member of that community of believers world-wide and of all ages which believes “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’ in this present age. 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.

“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.” (Romans 8:6)

We are called to separation from all those other loyalties which previously were so important.

“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, this knowledge of godly things brings a sense of peace which is beyond everything in this life. Its value cannot be measured by the values of this world. By commitment to our new Master we are part of those things which are eternal, as the apostle says:

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now 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 our lives. Our old ‘self’ tries to keep influence over our hearts and minds. This is why life is a fierce battle. Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are soldiers. The battlefield is within each one of us.

“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No-one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.” (2 Timothy 2:3,4)

As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we find that we can, so easily, 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?

In two ways. Positively, by keeping things which belong to God at the centre of our lives, and negatively, by keeping as far away from those old attractions as we possibly can.

Prayer

What does this mean in practice?

Disciples are now men and women who can call upon God at any time, as His children. They can speak to Him as “Father”—indeed, as “Our Father”. This is the most reassuring promise we have:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

“So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.” (Luke 11:9)

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

The Word of God

We get great help from the Word of God. We read many things—the daily paper, magazines and books of all sorts, 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 positively harmful: others are, to say the least, not good for us. Let us feed upon the word of God:

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.” (1 Peter 2:2)

“The spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” (John 6:63)

Yes, the Word of God is our sword of the spirit, that fights off the temptations that would overcome us (Hebrews 4:12) and keeps at bay those things which are impure, and offensive to God.

Shared faith

Disciples also receive great strength and encouragement from being with those