

Lesson 5

Your New Path: New Life in Christ Part Two

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Your new life is that of a disciple. A disciple is a follower. As a follower of Jesus Christ we must model our lives after him. He is our pattern and great example in all things. The disciple makes Christ the Lord of his or her life. A key verse for discipleship is in the Gospel of Luke. “Then he said to them all, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me’” (Luke 9:23). Jesus places three demands on his disciples: (1) Deny themselves, (2) Take up their crosses daily, (3) Follow Christ.

The first demand upon a disciple is to deny him or herself. This means that you no longer live for your own goals, motives, and ambitions. Neither do you live for the wishes of your family or community. You are no longer self-centered in your life style; you are Christ-centered. You now live for Jesus.

The second demand requires discipline. *Cross-bearing* means redemptive ministry. The servant serves his or her Lord, and he serves others. The disciplined life focuses on the Bible, prayer, fellowship, and ministry. Notice the first two emphasize the disciple’s relationship with the Lord, and the last two disciplines emphasize others, that is, believers and nonbelievers. We have already discussed the need for disciples to develop a regular practice of Bible reading and study. The last half of this lesson will deal with the discipline of prayer. The need for fellowship and ministry within the context of community is addressed in Lessons 8 and 9. These disciplines are all part of following your new path.

The third demand upon a disciple is following Christ. This involves obedience and fruit-bearing. Fruit is not given as a gift, nor does it come quickly. Fruit-bearing takes time, requires work on the disciple’s part, and grows naturally as a result of remaining in Christ.

Read John 15:1-17.

1. How does one bear much fruit? (John 15:5) _____.
2. How does remaining in Christ affect our prayer lives? (John 15:7) _____

3. Bearing much fruit glorifies (John 15:8) _____.
4. Bearing much fruit shows (John 15:8) _____.

Remaining in Christ, or remaining in his love, produces fruit in the disciple's life.

5. How do we remain in Christ and in his love? (John 15:9-10) _____.

Now read Galatians 5:16-26.

6. How do we overcome the desires of the sinful nature? (5:16) _____.

Paul says that the sinful nature and the Spirit are in conflict with one another.

7. What is the result? (5:17) _____.

8. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not (5:18) _____.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious (5:19), and those who live according to them will not inherit the kingdom of God (5:21). However, disciples should live in the Spirit, and they will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23). Paul says there is no law against these (5:23). What does he mean? You will find the answer as you read 1 Timothy 1:9.

Jesus is more emphatic in Luke 14:25-27 than in Luke 9:23. What does he say about someone who is unwilling to forsake all, carry his or her cross and follow Jesus?

9. _____.

Discipleship, that is, denying self, cross bearing, and following Christ, will cost the disciple his or her life. Life changes radically. Death to self may not always be a figure of speech. Many followers of Christ have been martyred for their new lives. Look at Luke 9:23 in its context: Luke 9:21-27.

List three things the Son of Man must face (Luke 9:22).

10. _____.

11. _____.

12. _____.

13. Is it possible for a disciple's life to go on unchanged (Luke 9:23)? _____.

14. What will happen if there is no change? (Luke 9:24) _____.

Holding on to the old life will kill spiritual life. The disciple will not grow spiritually, and he or she will die spiritually. Lifeless Christians do not produce fruit, do not contribute to ministry, do not contribute to the community life of the church, are poor witnesses of Christ, and they are in danger of reverting to their old life-style or religion.

15. What happens to the person who loses his or her life for Christ? _____
_____.

The phrase, “whoever loses his life for me,” is found in all four Gospels and in two Gospels more than once. No other saying of Jesus is given such emphasis. The culture of the kingdom of God is different than the world’s culture. The standards, motives, goals, and life-styles of the followers of Christ are counter-culture to the world. Standing up against the world’s ways is not popular. But Jesus promises the disciple will find new life in following him. The life Jesus gives is full of joy, purpose, and satisfaction.

Some of those who were listening to Christ that day witnessed the coming of the kingdom of God (Luke 9:27). It was not ushered in militarily, but by the death of Christ upon his cross. Crosses are made to die upon, not carry. Jesus wants his disciples to deny themselves, pick up their crosses, follow him, and die. What Christ meant is that a disciple must die to self and former life-styles and be willing to die literally if necessary.

Sometimes dying to self involves losing our families. Christ’s words in Luke 9:23-27 are found in Matthew 10:32-39 in a slightly different form. But Matthew includes something else about the death of following Christ.

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household. Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 10: 34-39)

For many, the cost of following Christ includes losing family, community, financial security, identity, and significance as a person. They are in need of a new family and a new community. As previously mentioned, Lesson 8 will discuss the disciple’s need to find his or her new family and community within the context of the church.

16. “Whoever finds his life will lose it” (10:39). What does Jesus mean?
_____.

17. How does the phrase “and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” give hope to the disciple who has been cut off from family and community (10:39)? _____
_____.

Prayer is one of the disciplines of cross-bearing. When speaking of prayer, we are not talking about prescribed rituals, dry routines, vain repetitions, or meaningless forms.

We are talking about conversing with the Almighty. God hears our prayers and he speaks to us. Old Testament life and theology placed heavy emphasis on prayer. John taught his disciples to pray (Luke 11:1). Jesus had set an example before his disciples as he prayed regularly. One day His disciples came to him while he was praying. They did not ask him to teach them how to preach powerfully, how to evangelize persuasively, how to interpret scripture exactly, nor did they ask for enhancement of any other ministerial gift. Luke 11:1 says that one of his disciples said to him, "Lord teach us to pray." This was certainly an appropriate request because Jesus prayed often, emphasizing the importance of prayer by deed. Jesus prayed at his baptism (Luke 3:21), alone with his disciples (Luke 9:18), in certain places (Luke 11:1), in the morning (Mark 1:35), withdrawn into solitude (Luke 5:16), all night on the mountainside (Luke 6:12), and before important events such as in the garden before his crucifixion (Luke 22:41). In the garden he prayed in agony, earnestly, and according to his Father's will (Luke 22:41-44). Jesus prayed for Peter (Luke 22:32), for children (Matthew 19:13), for the coming of the Holy Ghost (John 14:16), for the elect (John 17:9), and he prays for us to be kept from the evil in the world (John 17:15).

Now read Luke 11:2-13.

18. We are not praying to an impersonal deity, but to our _____.

19. His name is _____. This means that his name is holy.

We should not attempt to impose our will upon the Almighty but invite his sovereignty to control our lives (11:2). Yet, we have the right to petition God for our daily needs (11:3), especially our spiritual needs like repentance, grace to forgive, and deliverance from temptation (11:4). Pray with persistence (11:5-10). Our heavenly Father is good; he gives us what we need, that is, the Holy Spirit who helps in all aspects of our lives (11:11-13).

Jesus said that his house was to be called a house of prayer (Matthew 21:13). The disciples learned their lesson well, and the New Testament church was a praying church. "They all joined together constantly in prayer," and "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:14; 2:1-4). They prayed for the Lord's will at church business meetings (Acts 1:24). They devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42).

20. What happened when the church prayed (Acts 4:31)? _____.

The apostles gave themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). They prayed when they set apart the deacons for ministry (Acts 6:6).

21. What happened when Peter and John prayed for the disciples in Samaria (Acts 8:17)?

_____.

22. What happened when Peter prayed for Dorcas (9:40)? _____.

Peter prayed on a rooftop in Joppa. Cornelius prayed always, and his prayers were heard. The church prayed for Peter while he was in prison. They gathered and prayed in houses. The church in Antioch prayed, and they launched the church's first missionary endeavor (Acts 13:1-3). Paul and Barnabas prayed as they appointed elders in every church. Paul and Silas went outside the city in Philippi, expecting to find a place of prayer (Acts 16:13). Paul and Silas prayed in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25).

Read the moving account as Paul bid farewell to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38).

23. What did they do (Acts 20:36-38)? _____.

Before leaving the coast of Tyre, Paul knelt on the beach with the disciples of that area, along with their wives and children, and prayed (Acts 21:5). Peter commanded Simon to pray for forgiveness in Samaria (Acts 8:22).

24. What did James say to do if anyone is in trouble (James 5:13)? _____.

25. What did he say to do if there is any sick among you (James 5:14-15)? _____.

To the Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, and to Philemon, Paul said that he always prayed for them. The Spirit helps us in our prayer, and he prays through us (Romans 8:26-27).

Read 1 Corinthians 14:13-15.

26. Like Paul, we should pray with _____ and with _____.

27. How did Paul instruct the Ephesians to pray (Ephesians 6:18)? _____.

28. Why should you pray for your pastor, for missionaries, and for others in ministry (2 Corinthians 1:11; Colossians 4:3)?
_____.

Actually, we are to pray for all saints (Ephesians 6:18) and to let our requests be known to God (Philippians 4:16). We are to pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul requests, "Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you" (2 Thessalonians 3:1). Jesus commanded his followers to pray for workers to be sent into the harvest field (Luke 10:2). Paul said that we should pray "for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives, in all godliness and holiness" (1 Timothy 2:1-2). James tells us to pray for one another (James 5:16), Jude tells us to pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:20). Jesus instructed us to even pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). He said to pray believing, in secret, and without vain repetitions (Matthew 6:5-8). In looking for the return of Jesus, we should watch and pray (Mark 13:33, KJV). If we ask the Lord for wisdom, he will give it to us.

29. How should we ask for wisdom (James 1:5-8)? _____.

30. How can we avoid falling into temptation (Matthew 26:41)? _____.

Pray always and do not lose heart; pray without pride, but as one pleading for mercy. Jesus said that some pray lengthy prayers for show, taking advantage of people, even widows. The angel told Cornelius that his prayers come up for a memorial before God, and Peter said that the Lord's ears are open to the prayers of the righteous (1 Peter 3:12). In Revelation 5 and 8, the prayers of the saints, as incense and as a vial of odors, rise to the throne of God. It is no wonder that Paul told Timothy, "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger, or disputing" (1 Timothy 2:8). If you ever come to the point where you do not know what to pray for, just refer to the previous list, and you will find plenty to pray about.

31. Memory Verses:

Then he said to them all, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:9-13)

32. Action:

If you do not practice a regular time of personal prayer, begin now! Do not wait another day! Set aside a time each day to be alone with God. Begin by using the study in this lesson. Read Scripture as you pray. Some portions of Scripture provide prayers for you. Make a prayer journal. List your requests as they come to mind. As you read over your list in prayer each day, cross off the ones that the Lord has answered. Pray to the Father in Jesus' name, and do not forget to give thanks.

33. Rethink the Lesson:

- The three demands of discipleship are self-denial, cross-bearing, and following Christ.
- The disciplined life focuses on Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and ministry.
- Remaining in Christ, or remaining in his love, produces fruit in the disciple's life.
- Obedience to Christ keeps us in his love.
- Jesus was our example. If he needed to pray, we need to even more.
- When the early church prayed, the Holy Spirit often moved mightily.
- We should pray for our pastors and for all those in ministry.
- James said that we should pray in faith, believing that we will receive.
- Jude said that we should pray in the Holy Spirit. Lesson 9 will expand on that.

Answers to Lesson 5:

1. Living in Christ and having Christ live in me.
2. My prayer life will be powerful and effective.
3. The Father.
4. Proves discipleship of Christ.
5. Obey Christ's commands. This means obeying his words, or obeying the Word of God, the Bible.
6. Live by the Spirit.
7. You will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.
8. Under law.
9. That person cannot be Christ's disciple.
10. Suffer many things.
11. Be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law.
12. Be killed, and on the third day be raised to life.
13. No.
14. The spiritual life will die.
15. That disciple will have a fulfilled life, eternal life, and a life full of God's blessings.
16. Whoever values life more than following Christ will not inherit eternal life.
17. God will replace the hurt of losing family and loved ones with the joy of his presence.
18. Father.
19. Hallowed.
20. The place was shaken; all were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.
21. They received the Holy Spirit.
22. She opened her eyes and sat up.
23. They knelt down together, prayed, wept, embraced, and kissed.
24. Pray.
25. Call for the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.
26. With my spirit and with my mind (understanding).
27. Pray in the Spirit.
28. Prayer helps those in ministry. Also, prayer opens doors of ministry.
29. Believe and do not doubt.
30. Watch and pray.