



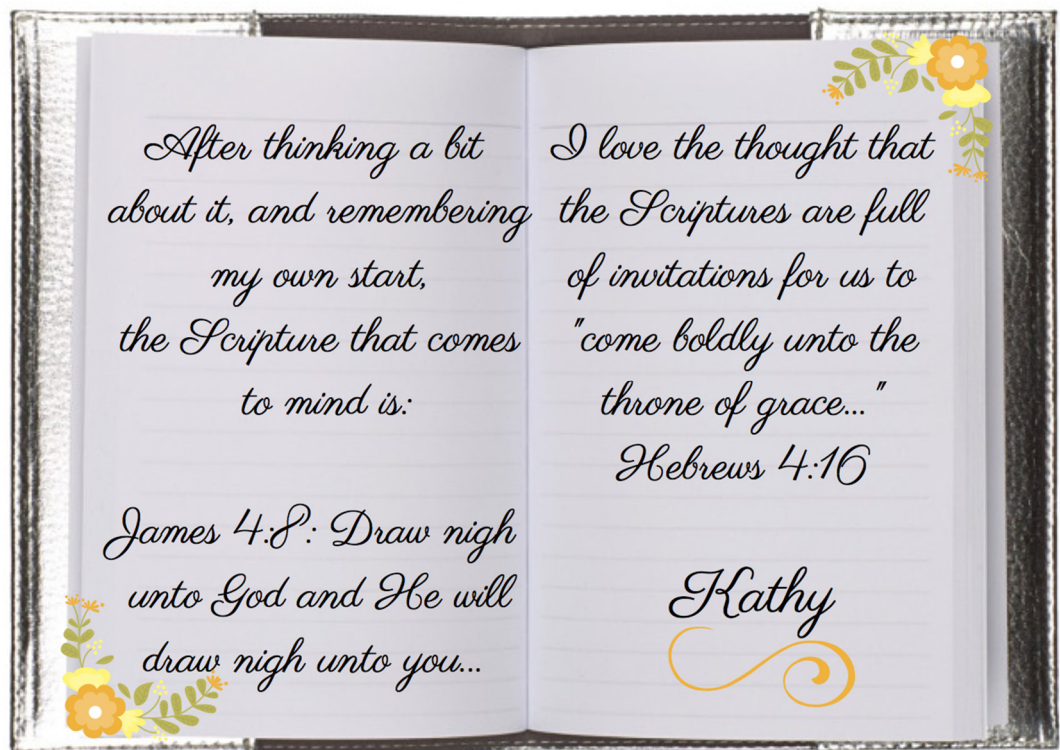
So, Where Do I Start?

James 4:8: (NASB) *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded...*



Tell me if this is familiar: You have decided that your life feels pretty empty, that what you have tried and how you have tried it just does not work. You know there has to be more meaning to life and so you are drawn to Christianity. While you may feel better, you slowly start to get that gnawing feeling that nothing has really fundamentally changed in your life. What do you do? How do you find the real bottom line change that you have been looking for and actually let it change you? If this description fits you or someone you know, then stay with us now, because we are going to get basic and practical! I am a Christian but want to REALLY be a Christian. So, where do I start? How do I allow Christianity to be the agent of serious change in my life?

Several weeks ago, we put this very question out to many of our CQ staff and asked for their very practical input on what they thought were some of the most important things for a new Christian to focus. Our content today is largely made up of their advice.



Let us start with the theme Scripture:

James 4:8: (NASB) *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*



Focus Point: View the call to Christianity as exactly what it is - an invitation.

First, we need to realize the call to Christianity is an invitation. Although there are many aspects to this invitation, there is one key point: *when you get an invitation, you answer it* - you decide whether or not to accept it.

Matthew 11:28-30: (NASB) ²⁸*Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹*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.* ³⁰*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

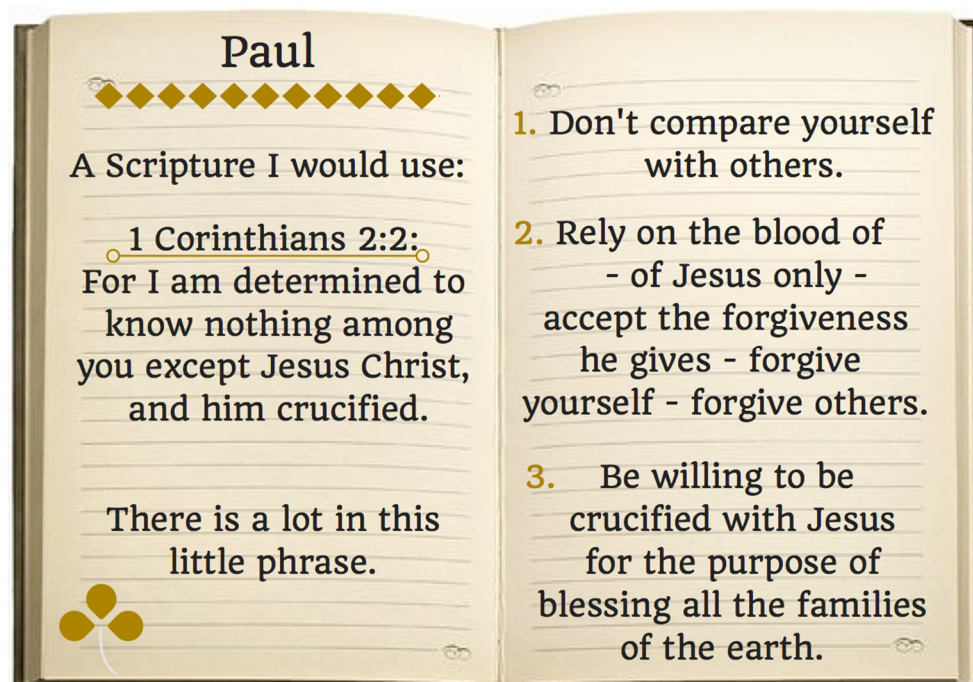
There is an invitation in the words *come to me*. The Scriptures are full of little invitations. We are invited! Once you accept an invitation, what do you do? You comply with its conditions and you want to look and be your best!

This reminds us of Luke 14:15-24, The Parable of the Wedding Banquet. This was an invitation, too. There were several invited who had excuses why they could not come. The invitation then went out to others until the wedding banquet was filled.

There is a difference between appreciating Jesus and his sacrifice and coming to him and being a footstep follower. Jesus says, *Come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest.* If you accept the invitation, you have to *allow* him to give you rest.

James 4:8: (NASB) *...Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

These are part of the conditions of coming to Jesus so we can actually be given rest. Change must take place and we have to understand the invitation first. Now that we are going to the event, what should we expect to be required of us?





How am I going to present myself to be in harmony with this invitation? The answer Paul on the CQ staff mentioned was what the Apostle Paul wrote, *I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ*. Paul, our CQ staff member, says we can use others as inspiration but do not compare. *Him crucified* means forgiveness is available to every one of us. We should be able to forgive others and ourselves as well. The idea of blessing all the families of the earth is that Christianity is more than just for the purpose of bringing you to Christ and giving you salvation. It is through Jesus and his body (the church) that all the families of the earth will be blessed as mentioned in the Abrahamic promise. Make sure we are putting Jesus as the centerpiece of our lives.

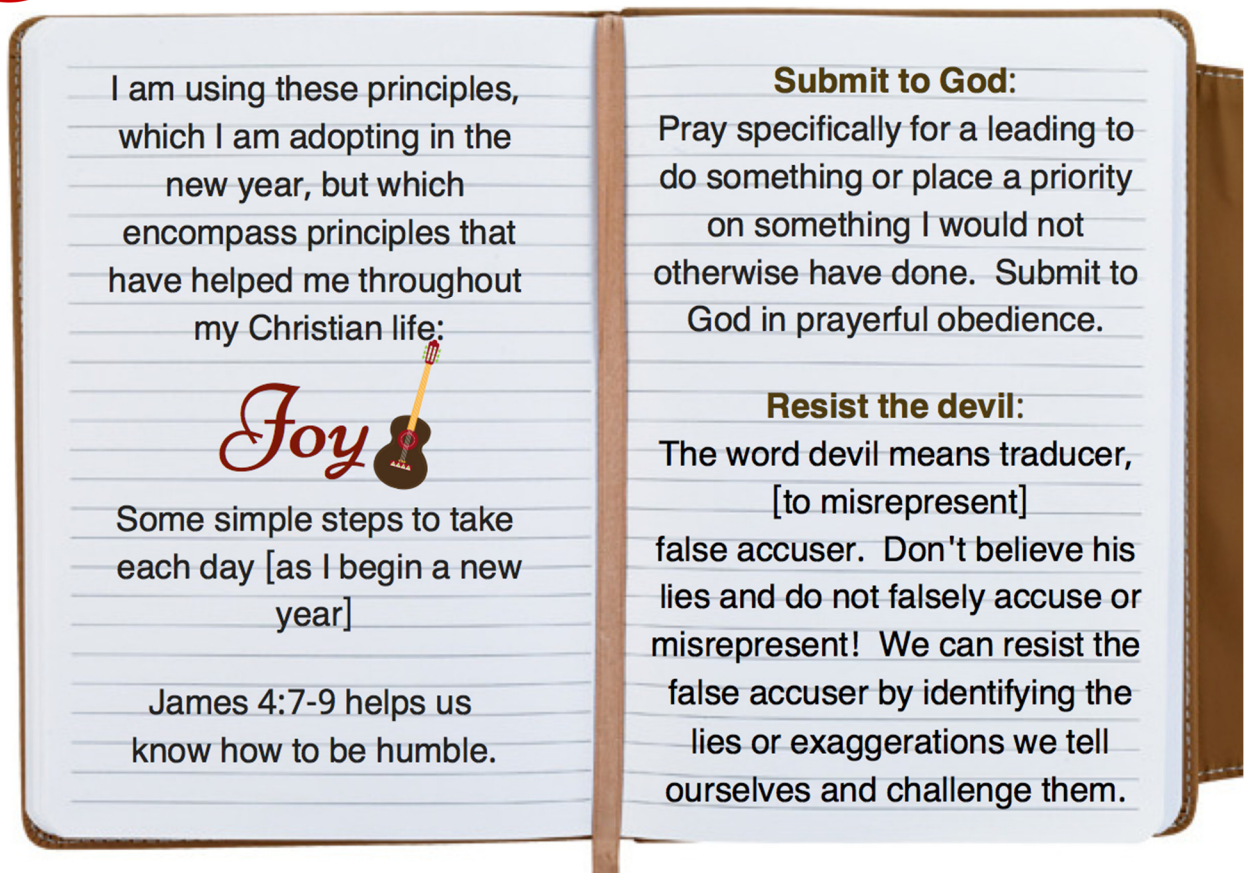
Do we truly realize we have been invited to a new life, to be lived in a new way with the promise of entirely new results? If we want to become a true follower of Jesus, what do we need to do right now?

**So, you answer the invitation for the new life -
but what does that really mean?**

Starting on the path happens *by invitation* and then the *acceptance of that invitation*. Now we need to be willing to walk on a path, which is a path not designed by us, but by God through Jesus for us. Not our will, but His will.



Focus Point: Submit to God and His will daily, seeing each day as a new opportunity to submit.





Kathy and Joy both chose James 4 because it has the same "let me get started" approach.

James 4:7-9: (NASB) ⁷*Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* ⁸*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* ⁹*Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.*

Be sober and serious about your life. Joy comments to submit to God. How do we find the will to continually submit to God? Look for specifics for things to do that maybe you would not have done, but now that you are following after Christ, you would do now. Look and pray for those opportunities to be presented to you. Joy also warns we unfortunately tell ourselves exaggerations and lies. Try to find the truth about what and who you are and follow God that way.

These two inseparable points stated differently:

1 Peter 5:6-8: (NASB) ⁶*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,* ⁷*casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. (Submit to God)* ⁸*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (Resist the devil)*

Submitting to God includes by very definition resisting the devil. This means whether it is a new walk or an experienced Christian walk, we can easily tell how our God-submission task is going by monitoring our Satan-resisting efforts.

How do we find the will to continually submit to God? You need a reason and a focus. What truly gets you going? We find the WILL when we find the WHY! Find your personal why!

Loni wrote: A few months ago, our Bible class had a study about "Inspiration." As we talked about the things that inspire us, we discovered that inspiration could be many different things for different people. One person may be deeply moved by music or art while another may analyze a scientific detail of nature and be profoundly touched with awe for our magnificent Creator.



Focus Point: Find what truly inspires you and hold it fast in your heart, mind and hands.

I think a primary step for us in our Christian walk is to explore and discover what really lights a fire under us and truly motivates us to act, to get going, and channel that energy into service for the Lord. For each of us, that answer may be a little different. As we grow and mature, what inspires us to be about the Lord's business may change, so it will be an ongoing process to rediscover throughout our life.

But the truly vital question is "How do we remain inspired?" The Christian walk is more like a marathon than a sprint, and in a marathon, there are times you feel great and you are striding along with ease; but there are also times of fatigue, discouragement and hitting "the wall."



So, what do you do? I was reminded of a television commercial that quoted Newton's Law of Motion: "A body at rest tends to stay at rest while a body in motion tends to stay in motion..." Don't stop. Even if you feel like you are not moving mountains for the Lord, move a rock, or a stone or even a pebble...just keep moving.



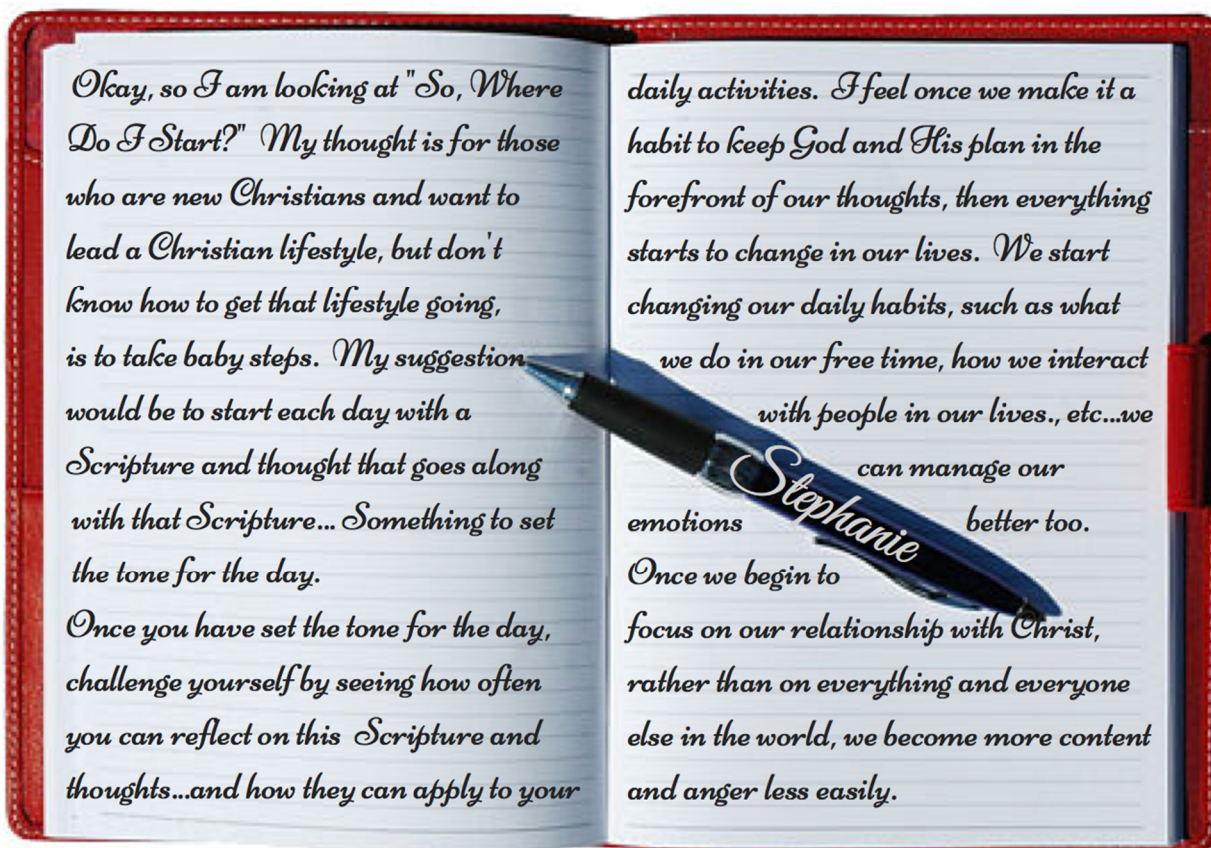
The same thing that inspires me today may not be the same thing that inspired me a year ago. What makes me want to go as a Christian? Find what inspires you and hold onto it tightly. Your WHY can change as your experiences change, as you grow and mature or even due to the changes in the world. It will be an ongoing discovery throughout your life. Loni's point is to just keep moving. It doesn't have to be big but just keep moving.

Inspiration is GREAT - but what do I do with it?

Inspiration Scripture referenced by Loni:

Isaiah 40:28-31: (NASB) ²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. ²⁹He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. ³⁰Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, ³¹Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

When you find what truly inspires you, it can give you that adrenaline rush that makes you want to conquer the world in the next five minutes. While this is an exhilarating feeling, it certainly is not a lasting transition. What do we do with the inspiration? How do we find the lasting transition?



We appreciated having so many individuals contribute on this program because they were each coming from their own perspective. When we put them together, we get this great big lesson that is so incredibly practical.



Focus Point: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time - take small steps with a daily inspirational focus and train your mind towards spiritual things.

Stephanie suggests small *baby steps* are what can really make a difference for us in our lives. We can see this is coming from her personal experience. One of those baby steps is to have a Scripture at the beginning of the day, an inspirational thought with that Scripture and then challenge yourself to see if during the day you can come back to that Scripture. Her point is that your day will form itself around lessons from that Scripture. This applies the idea of actual change.



recap
recap

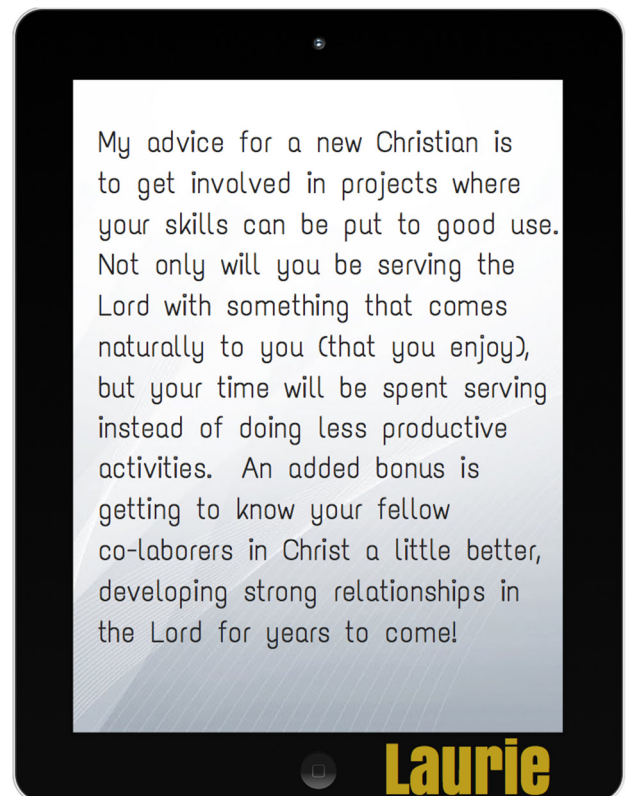
Loni suggests finding what really makes you go. Stephanie is saying find what makes you go and take baby steps with it. Joy states, make sure you submit to God and resist the devil and Paul tells us to make sure you know nothing else in life except through the eyes of Jesus, and him crucified. Kathy reminds us that it is an invitation.

Philippians 4:8: (NASB) *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*

This Scripture is a practical application. You can break the Scripture down and work on one aspect or lesson from the Scripture every day; a simple way to apply the idea of actual change.

"We have suffered from the preaching of cheap grace. Grace is free, but it is not cheap. People will take anything that is free, but they are not interested in discipleship. They will take Christ as Savior but not as Lord." — Vance Havner

Do not be just an appreciator of Jesus if what you are trying to do is follow Jesus. *Inspiration* combined with *daily baby steps* can be a transforming process, for it joins our biggest thinking (our inspiration) with our smallest tasks (baby steps)! Now, how can our small steps bless others?





What is interesting is that none of the individuals who shared their thoughts with us spoke to each other! They all approached this with a different perspective and we end up with a combination of very sound advice. Laurie is saying another great way to have your life be transformative is to get involved. Volunteer your time and do something to further the cause of Christ.



Focus Point: Learn to go beyond receiving to contributing and then to co-laboring!

Christianity's benefit is not just to receive blessings but it is also a way to bless. It is wonderful to see everyone work together for the cause of Christ. Christian Questions is a great example of this. There are many people who volunteer their time with so many different talents.

1 Corinthians 12:17-22: (NASB) *¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹If they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰But now there are many members, but one body. ²¹And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²²On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;*

The Apostle Paul is saying we all have different talents to offer and ways of approaching our Christianity. You do not look at what you contribute as more important than others but look at what you contribute as the part of a whole. By doing this, you are helping others to create a firmer focus of their Christianity. When you co-labor, you are completely engaged in whatever the opportunity is before you so you can be a part of something much bigger, which is transformative.



Focus Point: View the call to Christianity as exactly what it is - an invitation.

Focus Point: Submit to God and His will daily, seeing each day as a new opportunity to submit.

Focus Point: Find what truly inspires you and hold it fast in your heart, mind and hands.



Focus Point: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time - take small steps with a daily inspirational focus and train your mind towards spiritual things.

Focus Point: Learn to go beyond receiving to contributing and then to co-laboring.



Julie

Our journey is really summed up in the profound text of

> Micah 6:8: (NASB) <

He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice,
to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Such a simple admonition! Do what is right! Love mercy! Walk humbly with your God. This pathway is one to peace regardless of the storms going on in our lives. But easier said than done, right?

Let's break it down in steps:

Step one: Surround yourself with light:

1 Thessalonians 5:4-6: (NASB) *⁴But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; ⁵for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.*

Light needs to be your entire motivating factor and focus in your life. Do not let your life go a moment without light! This is such an important part of allowing your Christianity to truly transform you.



Focus Point: Find and dwell in true light for it will always overpower darkness - if we let it shine!

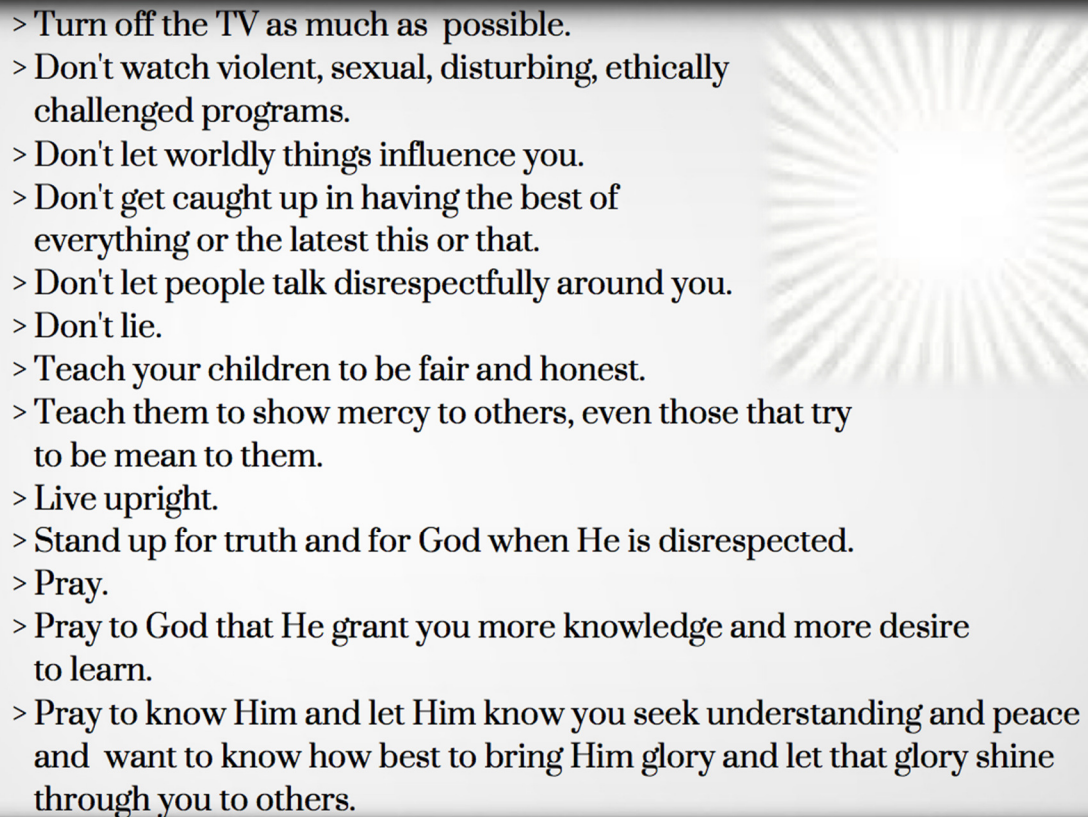
You can have the most powerful flashlight, and when you're in a dark place it is useless unless you turn it on.



A caller from Connecticut suggests: To qualify for this invitation, you need to endure a self-deficiency or a need. Matthew 16:24: *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*



Julie continues with a list of practical ways to surround yourself with light:

- 
- > Turn off the TV as much as possible.
 - > Don't watch violent, sexual, disturbing, ethically challenged programs.
 - > Don't let worldly things influence you.
 - > Don't get caught up in having the best of everything or the latest this or that.
 - > Don't let people talk disrespectfully around you.
 - > Don't lie.
 - > Teach your children to be fair and honest.
 - > Teach them to show mercy to others, even those that try to be mean to them.
 - > Live upright.
 - > Stand up for truth and for God when He is disrespected.
 - > Pray.
 - > Pray to God that He grant you more knowledge and more desire to learn.
 - > Pray to know Him and let Him know you seek understanding and peace and want to know how best to bring Him glory and let that glory shine through you to others.

To live in light is to make a choice over and over again that you will abide only where you can truly see, that you will work with integrity, that you will speak that which brings goodness and that you will dwell on only those things that feed life. This is a daily, baby step challenge!

1 Thessalonians 5:15-24: (NASB) ¹⁵See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. ¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰do not despise prophetic utterances. ²¹But examine everything



carefully; hold fast to that which is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil. ²³Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

All of these things are daily and sometimes moment-by-moment choices. Be inspired and choose rightly!

**How do we keep ourselves surrounded by light?
Is inspiration enough?**

Even if you are not a new Christian, this is a good program to check your life and say, how am I doing and what am I focusing on?

Light, humility, inspiration, small steps, contributing - all are ingredients for learning to live a Christian life. But there is more - to continue to live such a life we need what is next:

Step 2: Gain Knowledge:

The more you know the more you will be **AMAZED** at what God has in store for you and your children and all of us. You will sometimes shake your head in absolute disbelief at the "coincidences" that happen or the treasures you will find in Scripture. How do you get that knowledge? By reading and listening to sources that you trust have truth. The Bible is the ultimate source. Look at different translations (I love the New Living Translation to read the Bible stories. It is not a word for word scholarly translation. It just tells the story in modern English) to understand it better. It will happen piece by piece and step by step.

Julie

Julie's first step is to surround yourself with light and the second step is to gain knowledge. Put yourself in the position to learn why you want to be surrounded with light so you can understand the plan of God and how it relates to everyday life.

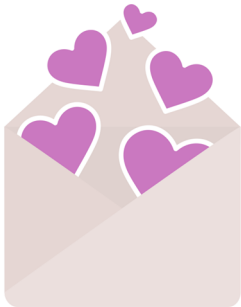


Focus Point: Realize that Christianity is a journey of experience, choices and lifetime learning.



2 Timothy 2:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. ¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

It is easy to *wrangle* about words because we all can study, think and conclude. Our learning therefore must be done with diligence! It is great to learn things, but what if you are learning the wrong thing? We want to know what the Bible really teaches and how it can actually change your life. We also want to know what the prophecies say so we can understand what is happening in the world around us.



Ella wrote: ...We need to **STUDY THE WORD**, **PRAY** about what we are studying, and then check our studies with other Christians. Therefore, **FELLOWSHIP** is most important. If we don't listen to the ideas of others and consider the results of their studies, we become stuck in our own mindset, which may need some tweaking.

Fellowshipping, if done with **THE RIGHT HEART ATTITUDE**, leads to understanding, not necessarily agreeing, but understanding another's views. This is very important since it is through fellowship that we **LEARN** to **LOVE** our brethren. That is not always easy, but if we sincerely **PRAY** about it God will give us the experiences we need to achieve this most important goal.

Ella



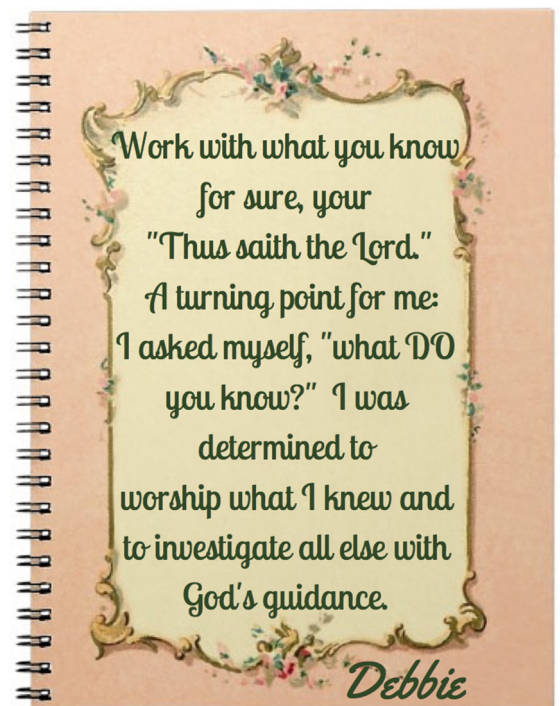
Ella's comments are about studying and taking the responsibility to learn into your own hands, but it is important to check those studies and thoughts against those whom you respect. We need to learn to co-labor in our studies.

"Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

When you are a disciple, you are trying to learn of the master and follow the master. Jesus said many things in the context of all of the Holy Scriptures. It is our daily challenge as Christians to study what he said so we can see what the real plan of God is and how it works.

1 Corinthians 12:27: (NASB) *Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.*

There are many different parts of the body but you are an individual member of it.





Work with what you know for sure, your *Thus saith the Lord*. Now you need to figure out the rest of the things to build upon the "for sure" things.

John 4:22-23: (NASB) ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

Learn from those sources that you believe have been able to find real truth to help fill in the gaps.



Focus Point: True Christianity is about maturing into one who is responsible for truth.

Debbie added: Thinking about this humbled me. Could I give an answer from my heart, using logic and faith? Do I HAVE TO have an answer for everything? Could I be wrong? Was I open to discussion?

1 Peter 3:15: (NASB) *but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;*

Give an account for the hope that is in you with gentleness and reverence.

We have to learn to have the right blend of humility mixed in with aggressive learning. If you preface your aggressive learning with humility it can be very fruitful. Our learning is always subject to being derailed by our own ego, so baby steps are often necessary to overcome this.

Are there things that we should focus on NOT doing?



A caller from Connecticut suggests: Several years ago I watched an interview where someone was asked, "Have you ever lusted in your heart for another woman during your long marriage?" The answer was lusting in your heart is as though you were following through. Does it also work in the opposite direction? If you think all good thoughts, like how you want to help people and be a blessing to people, is it as though I've done to them?

Thoughts pass through our minds all the time. If a thought passes through your heart but you do not allow it to sit there and take root and grow, then that is it very different than allowing a lustful thought to grow in your heart.

Sometimes I think about all these specific good deeds that I want to do, but I don't follow through. Is it as though I have done them?

No! The fact that you have the thought is a wonderful thing and shows your heart is in the right place. The challenge for our daily Christian walk is to take our heart being in the right place and have it transform into our hands being in the right place.



Ella added: STOP THINKING YOU ARE NOT WORTHY - NOBODY IS WORTHY AND YET WE ARE CALLED. When I was mentally considering whether I should consecrate my life to God or not, it was Romans 8 that did it for me. Romans 8:28-39 are very faith strengthening. If God called us and is with us and is giving us this opportunity for eternal life, who are we to question Him? We must move forward doing what He gives us to do and trust Him to carry out the rest.



If God called you, who are you to stand in His way?

Romans 8:28-30: (NASB) ²⁸And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

See how logical and sequential the mind of God is regarding His plan for our calling to follow Jesus? God does not just arbitrarily pick. He has a purpose for us which is why He calls us.



Focus Point: Learn to trust God's judgment on your behalf. This is not as easy as it sounds!

Ella: We need to focus on being *more than conquerors*.

Romans 8:31-39: (NASB) ³¹What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?** ³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered him over for us all, how will He not also with him freely give us all things? ³³Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (If we can really grasp and understand that statement for what it really means then that changes everything.) ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (It is only ourselves that can take us away from the love of Christ.) ³⁶Just as it is written, for your sake we are being put to death all the day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered. ³⁷But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If we want our Christian life to be the focus of our life, then those mistakes, challenges and difficulties will serve as stepping-stones so we can move forward and move up in our maturity level.

Ella: LASTLY, DO NOT FEAR. FEAR IS SATAN'S TOOL.

John 14:27: (NASB) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

Jesus is focusing us on the fact that he did it first; therefore we don't have to be worried.



Focus Point: Trust to the point that you will not act based on your fear but will act based on God's will.

Luke 12:32: (NASB) *Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.*

The Father has chosen *gladly* to give you the kingdom. What makes us so good? It is because of our willingness to follow after Jesus' faithfulness and our willingness to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. It is God's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. He *wants* to give it to you.

Isaiah 41:13: (NASB) *For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, who says to you, do not fear, I will help you.*

Ella: There are so many Scriptures telling us not to fear, that God is in control of our comings and goings. He knows exactly what is going on in our lives and wants us to trust Him.

Write down some of the promises that are helpful to you. Memorize them and, most importantly, keep them in your heart. God loves you and He will NEVER leave you. So don't leave Him! AMEN!

We want to thank all those who wrote in and gave us excellent advice for Christians who are just getting started in their lives. What do you do, how do you act, what do you think, where do you go? Take this program and use it as a tool to help you be faithful day after day, moment by moment, baby step by baby step, inspiration by inspiration, co-laboring by co-laboring. Don't wait! Get started!

*So, where do I start?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*

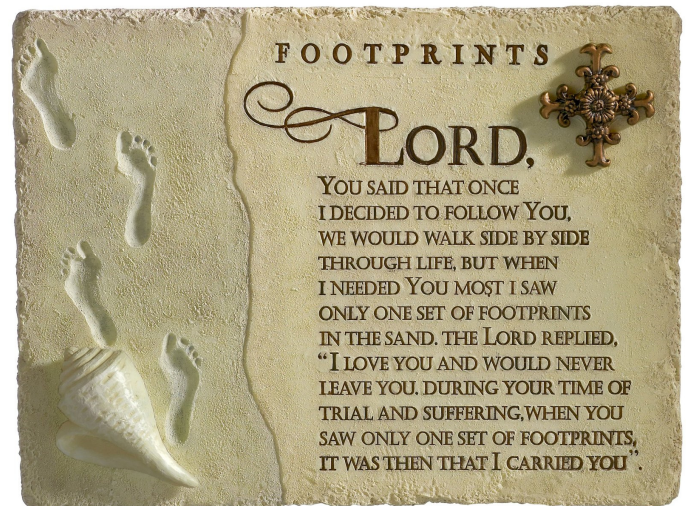


For our Bonus Material this week, we thought we would give you a look at some of the rest of what a few of our CQ staffers wrote to encourage new Christians. All of it is not listed here and all staffer's comments are not referenced due to repetition of points - just a few extra points to ponder...

Loni continued: Isaiah 40:30 says: *Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*



I believe this scripture is describing different seasons in our lives and in our Christian walk. Sometimes, you will be soaring above the clouds, sometimes you will be running up the hill, and sometimes you will be walking in the valley. The important point is that in each action you must keep moving forward. And we know that even if we are weary and cannot even walk, Jesus will carry us. (The last phrase relates to "The Footprints Prayer.")



Joy's full comment:

I would use these principles, which I am adopting in this New Year, but which encompass principles that have helped me throughout my Christian life:

These are some simple steps to take each day as I begin a new year.

James 4:7-9 helps us know how to be humble:

Submit to God: Pray specifically for a leading to do something or place a priority on something I would not otherwise have done. Submit to God in prayerful obedience to obey.

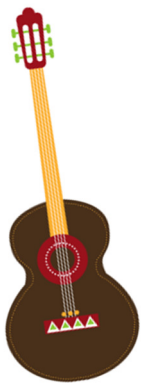
Resist the devil: The word devil means traducer, [to misrepresent] false accuser. Don't believe his lies and do not falsely accuse or misrepresent!!! We can resist the false accuser by identifying the lies or exaggerations we tell ourselves and challenge them. When I journal I have been writing down my more natural statements of what is happening in regular ink, and then HIS perspective in red. It is not helpful to deny when something is discouraging or negative. But I don't have to live there. It is helpful to acknowledge the difficulty before God AND to acknowledge and focus on the gift behind the challenge and the greatness of God working through it all for growth.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you: Ask very specifically to be close to the heart of God and Christ in this day. Express the desire for close companionship and to seek it.

Cleanse your hands you sinners: Be aware to identify what actions need to be cleaned up, and take the steps necessary.

Purify your hearts you double-minded. James 1:8, Matthew 6:22 - Reaffirm the Pilot of our soul. It doesn't work to have our rudder be double-piloted. (James 2:3-4) Identify the competition and reaffirm our allegiance. No competition!

Mourn, weep, and be afflicted: Strong's #5003 to be wretched, for example, realize one's own misery. Get the impact of our choices: when we choose to





focus on what we think is wrong, on how we think we have been wronged, on negative perspectives, we create our own misery.

James 4:10: *Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

If we practice being in His majestic, awe-inspiring presence, we are humbled by who He is, and His unfathomable love and holiness.

James 4:6: *Know that no matter what the pattern or habit we deal with in this New Year, He gives more **grace** <5485>.*

Grace: Strong's #5485, graciousness, especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life including gratitude

Debbie's full comment:

Simplest way I can summarize my advice:

- Pray (petitions, praises, etc. in ALL your ways acknowledge Him).
- Know God's word (read it daily).
- Have faith.
- Ask.
- Work with what you already know.
- Test and use your "sanctified common sense;" if something doesn't add up or seem fair or God-like, investigate.
- Live selflessly.

Proverbs 3:5: *Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding.*

Proverbs 3:6: *In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

- Have faith.

Hebrews 11:6: (MKJV) *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

- Know the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:14-17: (Phillips) *Yet you must go on steadily in all those things that you have learned and which you know are true. Remember from what sort of people your knowledge has come, and how from early childhood your mind has been familiar with the Holy Scriptures, which can open the mind to the salvation, which comes through believing in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for re-setting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God and fit him fully for all branches of his work.*

Advice from the LORD to Joshua; he had to be familiar with the Law:

Joshua 1:8: (KJV) *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

Solomon was admonished to read the Law:

1 Kings 2:3: (MKJV) *And keep the charge of Jehovah your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn yourself.*



1 Kings 3:3: (MKJV) *And Solomon loved Jehovah, walking in the statutes of David his father. Only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.*

1 Kings 3:14: (MKJV) *And if you will walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.*

Nathanael knew the Law and was skeptical...in a good way:

John 1:45-47: (Phillips) ⁴⁵*Now Philip found Nathanael and told him; we have discovered the man whom Moses wrote about in the Law and about whom the Prophets wrote too. He is Jesus, the son of Joseph and comes from Nazareth.* ⁴⁶*Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Retorted Nathanael. You come and see, replied Philip.* ⁴⁷*Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him and remarked, now here is a true man of Israel; there is no deceit in him!*

1 John 4:1: (MKJV) *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but try the spirits to see if they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

- Work with what you know FOR SURE, your *Thus saith the Lord*.
- A turning point for me: I asked myself, "What DO you know?" I was determined to worship what I knew and to investigate all else with God's guidance.

John 4:22-23: (Phillips) ²²*Nowadays you are worshipping with your eyes shut. We Jews are worshipping with our eyes open, for the salvation of mankind is to come from our race.* ²³*Yet the time is coming, yes, and has already come, when true worshippers will worship in spirit and in reality. Indeed, the Father looks for men who will worship him like that. God is spirit, and those who worship him can only worship in spirit and in reality.*

Thinking about this humbled me: Could I give an answer from my heart, using logic and in faith? Do I HAVE TO have an answer for everything? Could I be wrong? Was I open to discussion?

1 Peter 3:15: (BBE) *But give honour to Christ in your hearts as your Lord; and be ready at any time when you are questioned about the hope which is in you, to give an answer in the fear of the Lord and without pride;*

Hebrews 4:12: (ASV) *For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

- Humbly ask for God's Holy Spirit to guide you in all you do.

John 16:13: (MKJV) *However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, He shall speak. And He will announce to you things to come.*

Luke 11:9-13: (MKJV) *And I say to you, ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives. And he who seeks finds. And to him who knocks it shall be opened. For what father of you, if the son asks for bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a snake for a fish? Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he give him a scorpion?*

Luke 11:13: *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?*

What a sweet, humble petition for such a grand privilege!

1 Kings 3:7-9: ⁷*And now, O Jehovah my God, You have made Your servant king instead of David my father. And I am a little child; I do not know to go out or come in!* ⁸*Your servant is in*



the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a numerous people who cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. ⁹And give to Your servant an understanding heart, to judge Your people, to discern between good and bad. For who is able to judge this, Your great people?

- Live selflessly.

Jesus felt love for this man who was obedient to the Law from the heart, but it seems he was at that time lacking the quality of selflessness, which would be necessary for those who would be a part of the Church:

Mark 10:17-22: *¹⁷And when he had gone out into the way, one came running up and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? ¹⁸And Jesus said to him, why do you call me good? No one is good except one, God. ¹⁹You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and your mother. ²⁰And he answered and said to him, Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth. ²¹Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him and said to him, one thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven. And come, take up the cross and follow me. ²²And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved, for he had great possessions.*