



## Am I Failing as a Christian?

**Luke 6:27-28:** (NASB) *<sup>27</sup>But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*



What does it mean to be a Christian and how do I know if I am doing it right? What happens if I am doing it wrong? Is there a clear-cut standard? Will Jesus be disappointed in me if I fall short? Am I expected to change who I am, or develop who I am? Is my life supposed to be about everyone else, or do I just need to really love Jesus? Am I in line to get everything I want, or do I have to give everything up? How often do I have to go to church? Should I pursue a career? Do I have to study the Bible all the time? While defining success or failure as a Christian is not an exact science, it is a vitally important understanding we need to have. As we address these questions, our objective will be to find the biblical answers that can guide us to living our daily lives in accordance with God's will and word through Jesus.

### What IS the call to discipleship? Is there a clear-cut standard?

Let's begin at the beginning - the call to Christianity:

Yes, there is a clear-cut standard for this call, but it does not mean every faithful Christian sees it the same way, thinks the same or develops Christian maturity in the same way. We approach it individually.

### DISCIPLESHIP QUESTION:

Have I received the call to discipleship successfully?



Or...

...have I failed to recognize it for what it is?

We have all heard the term "altar call" - when there is an invitation in some churches to come forward and publicly accept Jesus Christ as your savior. Some people do this in the emotions of the moment or because it seemed expected and wonder, now what? Did my life just change somehow? Did I just make some sort of promise?

### Discipleship begins with a decision by God to call us:

**John 6:44:** (NASB) *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

This is a specific call from God and goes out to many. All do not answer or even hear it. This has been the case with the Jews during the time of Jesus, as well as through the entire age of the gospel message - including the present time.

**This is an individual call.** Our part is to answer the call.





Answering the call to Christianity is not an emotional decision; it needs to be a thought-out commitment:

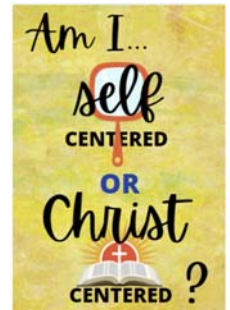
Luke 14:27-28: (NASB) <sup>27</sup>Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup>For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

Discipleship is costly! Jesus taught us to count that cost carefully. Will we follow through on his teaching?

All the points in this episode deserve a detailed topical study:



Examining what discipleship is and what it is not



Some may be content with the idea of being a good person and being inspired by the word of God. That is great, but it is not discipleship. Discipleship is to be a learner and follower. Are we prepared to give of our time, our possessions and our will to do God's will? Do we have the determination to fulfill what is required?

The call is personal - are you going to build *your* tower? It is a lifelong project to grow in Christ. God chooses us, but it is our choice to carefully consider answering the call. It has to be a *considered* choice, NOT an emotional one!

Many who follow along with Jesus do so for the personal comfort they receive. Jesus himself called out this behavior.

**This takes place after the miraculous feeding of the 5,000:**

John 6:26-27: (NASB) <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered them and said, Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup>Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give to you, for on him the Father, God, has set His seal.



Am I progressing as a disciple  
because I have received the mission  
of the gospel with clarity?



Or...  
am I failing because I have  
reinterpreted the mission to suit me?

How do we "reinterpret the mission?" This happens when we add to the call of Christ things that make us feel good or comfortable. Or, we add in our own goals and objectives. This is reinterpreting the mission! The mission should be following in the footsteps of Jesus.



Let's revisit our Discipleship Question: Have I received the call to discipleship successfully, or have I failed to recognize it for what it is?

Do we think, "Well, I came to Christ, whatever that actually means, and now I'm going to heaven." Is that using the name of Christ, but misrepresenting the purpose? How do I know if I am being called?

Being "called" comes from God and is a burning desire to find out, to investigate, to grow and to understand more about God and Jesus. It is not about feeling good – that is about being soothed. There is a difference between being called to sacrifice by following Jesus and being soothed so that we feel better. This call is much bigger.

It is easy to fall into this emotional loop. We get caught up in it and then do not move forward.



What if we have failed in responding to the call? Then we must ask ourselves: Do I love Jesus? Do I want to do God's will? If so, repent, learn from our mistakes, learn from these scriptures and principles, and let's move on to the next thing!

This has a lot of details involved in it. We will break it down as we go through each segment.



Do I love Jesus? Do I want to do God's will?

It is one thing to love Jesus, but it is another thing to love Jesus in a way that makes us say, "I am going to put my will aside. I love Jesus so much that I will do whatever it is God would have me to do, even if I do not want to do it." This is what it means to love Jesus and to want to do God's will.

Many people say, "Jesus loves you," and have the famous bumper sticker, "Honk if you love Jesus" - how do you love someone you never met? Is loving Jesus a prerequisite to being called to discipleship or does that automatically grow in time?



We love someone we never met by finding out who they are, what they did, what impact they had, and what their character and mission are about. We are to be inspired and want to grow and be like that.

Do we have to love Jesus before we are called? No! Why do we say that?

We see the example of the life and call of the Apostle Paul who originally HATED Jesus! He was on his way to destroy Christians when he was halted by Jesus himself. The Apostle Paul loved God and the Jewish Law. All God needed to do was to take that zeal and turn it in the right direction.





There are three questions we need to ask ourselves:

1. Do I recognize I am a sinner?
2. Do I recognize Jesus as my personal savior?
3. Have I made an unreserved vow to dedicate my life to do God's will, not my own?

The love of Jesus requires action! The action of sacrifice.

Success or failure as a Christian depends on a fundamental understanding of what it will cost us.

Now that we see the high standard, are we expected to change who we are, or to develop who we are?

The answer here is a yes to both - but be careful! It is far too easy to look at the "self-development" part of the question through the eyes of human ambition. Successfully developing as a disciple of Christ requires that development to be focused through God's will and providence and not our own ambitions. We confuse our own ambitions and emotions with the will of God. We cannot do that!

### DISCIPLESHIP QUESTION:

Do my choices and lifestyle coincide with sound discipleship principles?



Or...

...do my choices and lifestyle fall far short and support earthly emotions and desires instead?

Let's get practical:



- What does my life look like to others?
- How involved should I be in politics?
- Is it okay to live with my boyfriend (or girlfriend)?
- Is it okay to spend my money on this or that?

How are we going to make these kinds of decisions?

The answers to many of these kinds of questions depend on the individual, except for questions involving morals. If the Bible says NO, then the answer is NO!

The counter question: Do we want to do the will of God through Christ? If this is our primary objective, then dealing with the questions becomes far easier.

**Jesus is our ultimate model for lifestyle and choices. As a man, he put his own will aside:**

Psalms 40:7-8: (NASB) *<sup>7</sup>Then I said, Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. <sup>8</sup>I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.*

Look at the desire here - *I delight to do Your will, O my God.*

**This can be hard:**

Matthew 26:39: (NASB) *And he went a little beyond them, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as You will.*





Jesus is our model. There were things that were very difficult for him, but he did them anyway to fulfill the mission his Father had set for him. We want to work towards his example.

### Jesus also NEEDED to suffer:

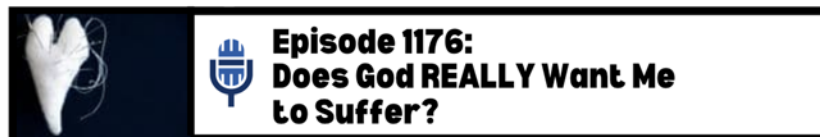
Hebrews 5:8: (KJV) *Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he **suffered** <3958>.*

**Suffered**: Strong's #3958 *pascho*; to experience a sensation or impression (usually painful)

Jesus needed to learn obedience as a perfect man. He learned to do the will of God, not doing the will of a perfect man, but the will of God which is above his own will.

Jesus was not "suffering" every day of his life. He was sacrificing his own will every day. In many cases, it was a joyful experience - *I delight to do Your will*. He was experiencing being offered up every day of his life, whether it hurt or was joyful! He did the will of the Father every day.

This topic of suffering is the one we get the most mail about from listeners. If you would like to go deeper scripturally on this, listen to:



Putting our personal sufferings into context with God's plan

We also are compelled to give up our own will - to change who we are - and suffer for the sake of God's will. This is not easy.

### Giving up our own will is not an instant decision, but a process:

Romans 12:1-2: (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup>And do not be **conformed** <4964> to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

### Do not be conformed:

**Conformed**: Strong's #4964 *syschēmatizō*; to fashion alike, i.e. conform to the same pattern (figuratively):—conform to, fashion self according to.

This is being contrasted with *transformed* - we are to break out of the pattern of sin, greed, selfishness, violence and so on that is present in today's world.

Romans 12:1-2: (The Living Bible) *<sup>1</sup>And so, dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy—the kind he can accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? <sup>2</sup>Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how His ways will really satisfy you.*

This means changing the expectation of our lives to having an expectation that will please God, not one that seeks our own happiness. We need to seek God's joy, not our own.



## This transformation challenge is a result of God's spirit working in us:

2 Corinthians 5:17: (NASB) *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

Being a **new creature** means that God's power and influence have taken root within us. It dwells within us and drives us. These scriptures focus us on changing who we are to become Christlike. This is an absolute necessity.

Now let us look at developing who we are in all our imperfect glory to become more Christlike. Wait, "imperfect" and "glory" do not seem to fit together! Think about it - we are presenting this imperfect individual to God, but where is the value? Why would He want us? Our value comes through Christ.

## Our imperfect glory makes room for the righteousness of Christ!

2 Peter 1:5-10: (NASB) *<sup>5</sup>Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, <sup>6</sup>and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, <sup>7</sup>and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.*

This is about developing who we are. We are required to develop ourselves with godly traits. What is the result of this development?

*<sup>8</sup>For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Having these qualities makes us useful to God, the Creator of the Universe. What is the opposite, if we do not develop these qualities?

*<sup>9</sup>For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;*

**Practice makes perfect?** Well, perfect practice makes perfect! If we practice this higher level of godliness, we will never stumble. Our lives are a continual process of shaping our human character to fit into the mold of discipleship. This is a major factor in attaining Christian maturity.

Next, let's look at how to successfully combine changing who we are and developing who we are:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10: (NASB) *<sup>7</sup>Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!*

The Apostle Paul did not want to exalt himself because of the great privilege he had been given in the revelations God granted him. He saw many aspects of God's plan clearly, and this could have made him feel superior to others. This is the wrong kind of development and Paul felt God helped him by giving him a humbling **thorn in the flesh**.

*<sup>8</sup>Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. <sup>9</sup>And he has said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*





Paul's reaction to Jesus telling him he would not remove the *thorn in the flesh* is to boast in his weakness. If we look at our weaknesses and praise God for them, this is the *proper* self-development. *When I am weak, then I am strong* is showing we are changing who we are. If we let God's spirit drive our lives instead of attempting to have our lives drive God's spirit and His plans, we will gain the maturity we seek.

Though we are never told exactly what Paul's *thorn in the flesh* was; perhaps it was poor eyesight (See [Galatians 4:15](#) and [6:11](#)). Whatever it was, it was difficult for him. He would not have prayed three times to have it removed unless it was a big hindrance in his life.

Like Paul, we need to be changing who we are by growing into spiritual expectations rather than earthly expectations.



Learning how failure finds us and how to make it work for us



Am I progressing as a disciple because I am willing to develop all of what I am and have been given to the cause of Christ?



Or...

am I failing in my discipleship because I am willfully destroying opportunities for spiritual maturity because they do not suit my natural preferences?



Back to our previous Discipleship Question: Do my lifestyle and choices coincide with sound discipleship principles? OR, do my lifestyle and choices fall far short and support earthly emotions and desires instead?

Going back to our original questions:

- How active are we in politics?
- Should we live with someone before marriage?
- How should we manage our money?

We need to take our issues and put them squarely in front of scriptural principle, and not be afraid where the principle drives us. As humans, we like to drive the principle if we have a preference one way or another. But we cannot do that because we are disciples. A disciple is a follower, not a leader, following Christ and following the Scriptures.



What if we have failed in developing our character and changing ourselves? Then we must ask ourselves: Do we love Jesus? Do we want to do God's will? If so, **repent**, learn from our mistakes, these scriptures and principles, and let's move on to the next thing!



Let's focus on repentance. It is not just saying we are sorry; it is changing direction.



Learning what repentance is and is not and how it changes lives

Episode 1082 explained how there is a process to repentance:

- It is NOT a casual recognition of wrong.
- It is NOT regret. Regret causes us to PAUSE because something we thought or did does not sit well in our heart or mind.
- Repentance causes us to: STOP, OBSERVE, PROCESS, CONCLUDE and then fundamentally CHANGE DIRECTION.

Willful sin, which includes *feigning* repentance, indicates a severe lack of reverence for God. Seen in this light, it should really shift how we view intentionally doing what we know is wrong, or what we might just suspect is wrong.

Discipleship is not a game. It is a way of life, and there is a lot on the table. We need to focus ourselves directly and do what a disciple is supposed to do - learn and follow. Whether we are changing who we are or developing who we are, it always must be for the glory of God!

Is my life supposed to be about everyone else,  
or do I just need to focus on really loving Jesus?

Once again, the best discipleship answer has to do with a spiritually-healthy combination of both things. As Christians, we ARE supposed to be all about others. After all, Jesus died for the world! This does not cancel the deep-seated need we all have to personally love and live for Christ.

### DISCIPLESHIP QUESTION:

Do my intentions and actions  
aptly reflect the focus and deeds  
of a footstep follower of Christ?



Or...

...do they fail that standard  
and simply blend in with  
the rest of the world?

These are smaller and less conspicuous than the obvious lifestyle questions we talked about that can be seen by everyone.

Perhaps for us this might be something like:

- ➡ telling off-color jokes
- ➡ online flirting with someone who is married or if we are married
- ➡ being easily irritated and not patient with others or their circumstances
- ➡ maybe making sure your boss knows something negative about that co-worker who is up for the same promotion as you





- having an opportunity to co-labor with other Christians but a more exciting opportunity comes up that day with someone you would rather spend time with

These are little things that are “no big deal.” Or are they? If Jesus were sitting right next to us, would we do these things?

**James bluntly diagnosed the issues of worldly thinking within a Christian environment - self-centered intentions and actions only bring disunity with our Father:**

James 4:3-4: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup>You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James is writing to Christians. He is talking about becoming *an enemy of God*, and of being spiritual *adulteresses*. *You ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. Is this “no big deal”?*

**Instead, success as a disciple of Christ depends on walking away from our habits and feelings:**

Philippians 3:7-8: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

Think of how successful Paul (Saul) was as a *Pharisee, a son of Pharisees* (Philippians 3:5). He was at the top of the food chain within the Jewish hierarchy. Here he counts the loss of his status as *rubbish*! He learned about discipleship, following and doing the will of God. He rejoices in that rather than being on the top of a politically-driven organization with its own agenda.

**He walked *away* from those things in order to walk *towards* Christ:**

Philippians 3:13-14: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Seeing *the goal* of why we are disciples is so important every day. Each of us has a little different “why” we are disciples, but we are all reaching for the same goal. Our “why” needs to drive us towards Christ and away from everything else. We obviously do not abandon our responsibilities and family, but everything becomes secondary to following Christ, who comes first. He will help us meet our responsibilities.

**Our whole purpose is to be a small but vital part that operates within the body of Christ:**

Romans 12:4-5: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.





If we are *members one of another*, we should be paying attention to one another. We should be supporting, co-laboring, holding onto and encouraging one another. If they fall, we all fall. We need to help them up and work towards the goal of supporting the body of Christ. This is critically important if we are going to be true Christians.



**Back to the Discipleship Question:** Do my intentions and actions aptly reflect the focus and deeds of a footstep follower of Christ, or do they fail that standard and simply blend in with the rest of the world?



**Do my intentions and actions proactively support not only my discipleship but the discipleship of others?**



**Or...**  
do they fail to be supportive and end up subverting Christlikeness?

Maybe just a little flirting, quick to anger, a little sabotage, I'd rather do something more fun than be with my church group, a little here and a little there. What's the harm? Well, there is a LOT of harm!

We tend to try to find loopholes or generalize what we are doing as being "not that bad." Quite simply: Is this action honoring God and walking in the footsteps of Jesus or not? If the answer is "no," then why am I doing it? Why am I considering it? Why have I not walked away from it? We need to examine our intentions and actions - what is within us.

What if we have failed to be spiritual in our intentions and actions? Then we must ask ourselves: Do we love Jesus? Do we want to do God's will? If so, repent, learn from our mistakes, learn from these scriptures and principles, and let's move on to the next thing!



**Learn from our mistakes, learn from these scriptures and principles.**

Sometimes when we analyze ourselves - really analyze ourselves - even the secret dark yucky parts, we wonder how God can ever forgive us for treating all He has given us so *casually* instead of in a sacred way. Forgiveness plays a part in this.



How our forgiveness from God and for each other works

Quoting from Episode 935: "God by nature is compassionate, patient and loving, and our trusting in His compassion, patience and love is where our growth and maturity happens. It is a godly principle to accept forgiveness when it is offered." We need to learn from our mistakes.



## Am I in line to get everything I want, or do I have to give everything up?

These questions are all very dramatic. We used them specifically because these are often the types of questions we ask when trying to justify our behavior.

### DISCIPLESHIP QUESTION:

Does my attitude towards my position and possessions support my proclaimed position of discipleship and giving?



...am I holding on to what I have to hoard it for my own purposes?

This is about stewardship - none of it belongs to us - how are we handling all that is God's anyway?

The proverbial question is, if I follow Christ, am I supposed to sell everything I have and go live on a mountain somewhere? How about...?



- Should I go to college?
- Should I go to grad school?
- Should I put in all that extra time it will take to move up the corporate ladder?
- Should I buy a bigger house, another car, do I need the latest phone, sneakers, electronics?
- How do I spend my free time? Am I using what I have to help others?



We developed a decision tree in Episode 1167 to help us maintain spiritual excellence in all we do.

Life is about questions! What should we be doing with all these issues?

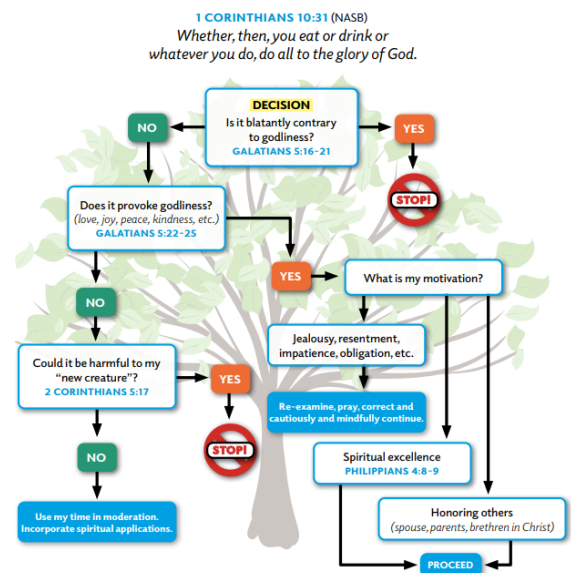
We are called to be stewards. A steward is one who takes care of their master's goods as if they were their own.

**Extraordinary responsibility which requires extraordinary discipline:**

1 Corinthians 4:1-2: (KJV) <sup>1</sup>Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup>Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

**We are God's property; therefore, we are responsible as stewards over our very own lives:**

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: (KJV) <sup>19</sup>What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy ~~Ghost~~ spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? <sup>20</sup>For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.



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If God owns us and everything we have, how should we reflect this in our daily lives?

Remember the rich young ruler? He was enthusiastically faithful to the Law.

**Jesus saw this and knew his heart was good, but his attachment to earthly wealth was too significant:**

Mark 10:21-23: (NASB) <sup>21</sup>Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, *One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.* <sup>22</sup>But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. <sup>23</sup>And Jesus, looking around, said to his disciples, *How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!*

Notice Jesus does not say it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom; he says it is difficult. Our hearts must be willing to let go of our attachments to earthly possessions. If our heart is so positioned, God often will give us stewardship of those possessions to use in His service.



**Does my attitude towards whatever earthly position or possessions I have build up the focus of my discipleship?**



Or...

**does my attitude towards position and possessions betray the very principles of Christlikeness?**

All those questions we asked about what we do and what we acquire or let go - these big and small decisions are included in our Christian liberty. We each have to decide what is best for our highest spiritual welfare, recognizing we still have to live in this physical world. But applying scriptural principles will help us make God-honoring decisions. This is what we are required to do as a disciple of Christ.

What if you have failed in properly assessing your position and possessions? Then we have to ask ourselves: Do we love Jesus? Do you want to do God's will? If so, repent, learn from your mistakes, learn from these scriptures and principles, and let's move on to the next thing!



**Learning is the key.**

It is one thing to hear it and say, "Okay, I get it," but to learn something means it becomes a part of you. We can also learn from the mistakes of others in the body of Christ. We can see how they have fallen and gotten back up. This is what fellowship is.

Being a disciple of Jesus is a "whole person" experience. We need to accept its influences in all aspects of our lives!





## How often do I have to go to church? Should I pursue a career? Do I have to study the Bible all the time?

We can be asking these questions for a variety of reasons. We may be asking to search out what our *minimum* discipleship requirements are. If so, then stop, look in the mirror and assess what you REALLY want out of life. We owe this to ourselves, and we owe it to our Lord. Or we can ask because we legitimately want to know how best to follow. If so, then let's proceed.

### DISCIPLESHIP QUESTION:

Does how I spend my time  
reveal a life fully invested  
into discipleship and service?



Or...

...does it expose a serious  
disconnect with God-based  
actions and spiritual maturity?

The question is, can I reflect Christ in even the mundane things I have to do in my life?

It is the difference between, *Ugh, do I HAVE to clean the bathroom?*  
And... *I get to clean the bathroom!* It is helpful when doing the messier chores of life, to think of the millions of people around the world who do not have a bathroom or a house that needs to be cleaned.

But let's get bigger. Do people see me as resentful, scared, competitive, worried, angry all the time, keeping close account to make sure I get all that is due to me? If we are following Jesus, they should be seeing us as someone different because of that transformation we are going through.

Maybe our human nature is naturally angry, or naturally anxious. Maybe we overreact to triggers with anger or anxiety. This does not mean, even though we are in Christ, that this natural tendency will vanish. It does not mean that we can just cover it over and it will go away. People should be able to see us struggling to overcome our faults. They should see us fail and then apologize, maybe time after time. Even if we have not overcome - especially if we have not overcome - we need to show that we are aware and working towards Christlikeness. God understands. The *effort* is what people see.

***I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day; I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way. — Edgar Guest***

***I learned more about Christianity from my mother than from all the theologians in England. — John Wesley, co-founder of the Methodists***

The takeaway from these quotes is for us to be an example. Our example will not be as a perfect human being, but we should be striving towards our Lord's example. We should strive to be courteous, humble enough to admit mistakes and to try again. We should be helpful to others, rising above our natural inclinations, continuing to work at it even though we are not good at it. This is the example people remember.



### Which sermon is MY life preaching? Is it this first “sermon of sin”?

Galatians 5:19-21: (NASB) <sup>19</sup>Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup>envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

These are natural parts of our human condition.  
Discipleship says we must put these aside.

### Or, is it this second “sermon of sanctification,” meaning set apart for a holy purpose?

Galatians 5:22-23: (NASB) <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.



Check out our CQ Kids video:  
**WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?**  
[christianquestions.com/youtube](http://christianquestions.com/youtube)

How we spend our time shows how we view our discipleship. Is there spiritual fruitage like that listed in verses 22-23, or is there earthly fruitage like that listed in verses 19-21? We should be known by our fruits, how God’s spirit manifests itself. Fruit is the manifestation of growth. This is the sermon we are supposed to preach without speaking a word.

Which sermon is on display in my daily life? With this being said, we can now get to our questions:

**When we look for the minimum discipleship requirement, this comes to mind. How often do I have to go to church?**

### How often do the best athletes consult with their coaches?

Acts 20:7: (NASB) *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.*

The disciples got together on a weekly basis which is a good start for us. At least we need to get together regularly. The Scriptures tell us we have to draw together, one to another.

But what if when we go to church we are just not getting anything out of it?

At this point we need to ask ourselves, *why am I not getting anything out of it? Is it because I am not applying myself? Or, am I feeling like the message I am getting is not spiritually sound or strong enough (with deeper truth)?* If this is your feeling, please drop us a note at [Inspiration@ChristianQuestions.com](mailto:Inspiration@ChristianQuestions.com). We need spiritual growth and development based on the Bible. We want to find a place where we can go where we have the Scriptures guiding us because we are disciples of Jesus. To *follow* in his footsteps, we have to *know* his footsteps and that knowledge comes through knowing the Scriptures.



**Our regular meeting together fuels us to combat the world of deception that surrounds us:**

2 Timothy 4:3-5: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,* <sup>4</sup>*and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.* <sup>5</sup>*But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*



The Scriptures warn us there will be places where spiritual nourishment will not be found. We need to seek spiritual food, fellowship and enlightenment regularly. The body of Christ has many individual parts that all contribute to making the entire body function as a single unit. This is what we strive for. How do we feed others if we are not around the others who need the feeding? How will we be fed if we are not around others doing the feeding?

**Should I pursue a career?**

We all should be caring for ourselves and our families. We cannot answer this for every individual. Each has his or her specific responsibilities.

However, here is the principle we need to live by:

2 Thessalonians 3:11-12: (NASB) <sup>11</sup>*For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.* <sup>12</sup>*Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.*

A disciple of Christ is at least responsible for taking care of themselves.

**As we pursue how to care for ourselves, our focus must be that of a disciple, which means we are seeking God's will:**

James 4:13-15: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>*Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.* <sup>14</sup>*Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.* <sup>15</sup>*Instead, you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.*

Should we pursue a career? Put it to the Lord in prayer. Look for the humility to take God's direction, not what we want. A disciple's mentality is to follow instruction and then act with diligence. When it comes to earning a living, whose instruction am I following?

*If the Lord wills* is first and foremost. If He does not will it, if He says no, then we should not proceed. Or, will we find a way to do it anyway? We might tell ourselves that we have not received any strong direction so we can do what we want! It is too easy to bend. Scriptural principle is scriptural principle.

**Do I have to study the Bible all the time?**

**How well do you want to know how to cope with life, how to understand the future, how to find hope, courage, inspiration and direction?**

2 Timothy 3:16-17: (NASB) <sup>16</sup>*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;* <sup>17</sup>*so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*



Again, often we ask that question because we are looking for the least amount we need to do. This tells us the Scriptures are *inspired by God*, and they are *profitable for teaching*. If this is true, why would we *not* want to know it? Why would we not want to make it a steady diet in our lives?



Check out our CQ Kids video:  
**WHY DO WE STUDY THE BIBLE?**  
[christianquestions.com/youtube](http://christianquestions.com/youtube)

It is one thing to know the answers are in the Bible and are the words of God; it is another thing entirely to make them your own through study:  
2 Timothy 2:14-15: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>Remind 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. <sup>15</sup>Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.



Does the way I spend my time clearly fulfill the requirements of a disciple's life?



Or...

does it fail to represent the honor, discipline and character of a follower of Jesus?



Back to the Discipleship Question: Does how I spend my time reveal a life fully invested into discipleship and service or does it expose a serious disconnect with God-based actions and spiritual maturity?

In other words, how do I spend my time? Can I reflect Christ in even the mundane things I have to do and be thankful for the unimportant moments? In addition, is my life reflecting the light of God through Jesus to others?

What if we have failed in our decisions regarding how we spend our time? Do we love Jesus? Do we want to do God's will? If so, repent, learn from our mistakes, these scriptures and principles, and let's move on to the next thing!



Learning means moving on.

It means accepting, changing and moving forward. Sometimes it is hard because there is regret, shame, and many other things that hold us back.



**Episode 1187:  
How Can We Overcome  
Crushing Guilt?**

Learning how to face, understand and conquer guilt and shame

This was a powerful episode with a special guest who accidentally killed someone in a horrific car accident. We explored how her Christian faith helped her process the aftermath in the years that followed.





This podcast has been about becoming a Christian and deciding to be a real, true disciple. It has been about asking all those really hard questions. We need to take the questions we asked here and seriously assess: *Where am I? Am I actually working at following Christ, or am I just pretending and feeling good as I go about loving Jesus?* There is an enormous difference. We need to take the name of Jesus seriously, and we need to abide by Scripture. Be the follower of our Lord, be that person who steps up, who sacrifices and shows honor to God in everything we do.

*So, am I failing as a Christian?  
For Jonathan, Rick and Julie and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on September 6, 2021  
Ep. 1194: Could Jesus Return Without You Knowing?

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

### Bonus Material and Study Questions

***Actions are the seed of fate. Deeds grow into destiny. — Harry S. Truman***

Reviewing our Discipleship Questions:

Have I received **the call to discipleship** successfully or have I failed to recognize it for what it is?

Do **my lifestyle and choices** coincide with sound discipleship principles or do my lifestyle and choices fall far short and support earthly emotions and desires instead?

Do my **intentions and actions** aptly reflect the focus and deeds of a footstep follower of Christ, or do they fail that standard and simply blend in with the rest of the world?

Does my attitude towards **my position and possessions** support my proclaimed position of discipleship and giving, or am I holding on to what I have to hoard it for my own purposes?

Does **how I spend my time** reveal a life fully invested into discipleship and service or does it expose a serious disconnect with God-based actions and spiritual maturity?

Some other examples of the challenges to being a successful disciple of Jesus:

We do NOT apply our Christianity with any seriousness.

**We wear the label but do not live the life. Example - the Parable of the Talents:**

*Matthew 25:24-30: (NASB) <sup>24</sup>And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. <sup>25</sup>And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours. <sup>26</sup>But his master answered and said to him, you wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. <sup>27</sup>Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. <sup>28</sup>Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. <sup>30</sup>Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The consequences of compromises that bring us an incognito Christian life are deep regret and anguish over opportunities lost.

**Misusing sacrifice to appear obedient: King Saul and the pitfalls of personal ego.**

**We want to believe we have carried out the will of God even though we customized and personalized it in the process. King Saul was guilty of this:**

*1 Samuel 15:20-23: (NASB) <sup>20</sup>Then Saul said to Samuel, I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. <sup>21</sup>But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal. <sup>22</sup>Samuel said, Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup>For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.*

Saul knew he disobeyed - he blamed others - but he took King Agag alive against the direct order from God. He wanted the glory of parading the captive king before his people. He allowed the people to take some of the spoil with the excuse it was for sacrificing to God. Samuel speaks the famous phrase, *to obey is better than sacrifice*.

Such misplaced thinking, conclusions and actions result in a dramatic loss of further opportunities to serve God. We need to learn to obey in order to sacrifice, not sacrifice in order to obey.

Feeding our misguided ego by a public display of sacrifice that should be meant for God may convince us of our faith, but it actually convicts us of our pride.

**One significant challenge to successful Christian living is that of fear. Fear of stepping out, fear of being different, fear of the pressures of this world:**

*2 Timothy 1:7: (KJV) For God hath not given us the spirit of **fear** <1167>; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*



## What is the *spirit of fear*?

Fear: Strong's #1167 *deilia*; fear

(Greek English Lexicon) 1) timidity, fearfulness, cowardice

This is contrary to appropriate fear:

Fear: Strong's #2124 *eulabeia*; properly, caution, i.e. (religiously) reverence (piety); by implication, dread (concretely)

King James Version translates this word: fear (-ed)

Hebrews 12:28: (KJV) *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly **fear** <2124>.*

We should maintain appropriate fear but seek to replace fear/cowardice with the spirit of power, love and a sound mind.

The spirit of power: what is it and why did the Apostle Paul write this to Timothy?

Power: Strong's #1411 *dunamis*; force (literally or figuratively); specifically, miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself)

Timothy, in a time of hard persecution, needed reminding to step out in God's power and not to fear:

2 Timothy 1:5-8: (NASB) <sup>5</sup>For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you... <sup>6</sup>For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup>For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of **power** <1411> and love and discipline. <sup>8</sup>Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

We MUST exercise this power by relying on our spiritual mind - not our earthly thinking and concern:

1 Corinthians 2:14,16: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>But a natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them. <sup>16</sup>For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

This power is miraculous - even in us who cannot perform miracles - WE ARE LIVING MIRACLES:

Ephesians 3:16: (KJV) *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with **might** <1411> by his spirit in the inner man;*

How do we access this power that comes from God and dwells in our spiritual mind?

What is the *spirit of love* and how does it work?

Love: Strong's #25 *agapao*; perhaps from *agan* (much); to love (in a social or moral sense)

Love: Strong's #26 *agape*; love, i.e., affection or benevolence; specially (plural) a love-feast

True Christian love: Strong's #25 *agapao*, Strong's #26 *agape*: This is a level of selflessness and benevolence that surpasses brotherly love as it encompasses a level of giving that has no thought of reciprocation - it is only concerned with the well-being of those to which it is giving.

1 John 4:18: (NASB) *There is no fear in **love** <26>; but perfect **love** <26> casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in **love** <26>.*



Learning to live in the *spirit of love*: We can only achieve the completeness of love by first acknowledging the power of God's influence.

### Christian character and actions detailed:

Romans 12:9-21: (NRSV) <sup>9</sup>Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup>love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. <sup>20</sup>No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### Remember, all our life as disciples is built around giving glory to God:

1 Peter 4:12-14: (KJV) <sup>12</sup>Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: <sup>13</sup>But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. <sup>14</sup>If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

### Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and Study Questions

Text

**CQREWIND**

to **22828** to get started.



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# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1193: Am I Failing as a Christian?

<https://christianquestions.com/program/1193-failure/>

See:  **CQ.Rewind**  
**SHOW NOTES**

1. How does our discipleship begin? Does everyone receive the “call” to become a disciple of Christ? What is our responsibility at the start of our discipleship? What is the difference between being a good person inspired by God’s word and being a disciple? (See Luke 14:27-28, John 6:26-27,44)
2. How can we reinterpret our mission to suit our human desires? What is our mission? Do we have to love Jesus to be called to become a disciple? Which questions should we ask ourselves to make sure we are headed in the right direction? (See Acts 9:1-7)
3. How do we follow Jesus’ example in our lifestyle and choices? Why did he need to learn obedience? Did Jesus lead a life of suffering? (See Psalms 40:7-8, Matthew 26:39, Hebrews 5:8)
4. Why do we need to both transform *and* develop ourselves? How can we successfully combine the two? What is the result of this development? What happens if we do not develop? (See Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 12:7-10, 2 Peter 1:5-10)
5. What issues arise when applying earthly thinking in a Christian environment? What should we do instead? How did Paul’s life change when he became a Christian? (See Romans 12:4-5, Philippians 3:7-8, 13-14, James 4:3-4)
6. What should our approach be when structuring our lives to sacrifice our earthly desires and follow Christ? What is stewardship? (See Mark 10:21-23, 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 6:19-20)
7. How can we best utilize our time as disciples to the Lord? How does our mindset have to change when leading a life reflecting God? Will the weaknesses in our human nature instantly improve? What purpose might the struggle against our human inclinations have? (See Galatians 5:1-23)
8. How can we balance church meetings and Bible study with our career and other responsibilities? How does regularly meeting together help us? Where is the danger in looking for the minimum requirements for discipleship? (See Acts 20:7, 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12, 2 Timothy 2:14-15, 3:16-17, 4:3-5, James 4:13-15)
9. How does your life reflect your decision to become a disciple of Jesus, or does it fail to represent the honor, discipline and character of his followers? Do you reflect Christ in your mundane activities? Are you reflecting the light of God through Jesus to others? How will you change and develop yourself to become a better disciple of Christ?