

TOOLS FOR BUILDING DISCIPLES :

Practical Hints regarding the Christian Life Wheel

BASIC QUALIFICATIONS FOR JESUS' DISCIPLES:

A Disciple of Jesus Christ...

1. **Is Born Again** In 3:8, Mt11:28, Jn 6:60ff
2. **Loves God** Mt 22:36-38
3. **Is a learner**, with a learner's humility Mt 11:29, Lk 10:34-42, Mt 23:10,12 Mt 18: 3,4
4. **Under Christ's authority and Lordship** Luke 6:10, *Col 1:18*, II Cor 4:5
5. **"Abides" in Him**(inward, enduring personal communion) Jn 15, II Jn 6
6. **Loves the household of faith** (church) In 13z34,35 I Tim 1:5
7. **Bears fruit** .In 15:8, Lk 6:43-45, Gal 5:21ff
8. **Willing to forsake people for Christ** Lk 14:26, Mt 10:35-39
9. **Willing to forsake possessions** Lk 14z27, Mt Bz20, 19:16-24
10. **Identifies himself with Christ** Lk 14: ?7 Mt 16 z 24f
11. **Ready to acknowledge Christ before others** Mt 4:19,10:32, I Pet 3:15
12. **Attitude of a Servant** Mt 10:42 Lk 6:32-36 1 Peter 4:10,11

What are the implications of these for our life's style

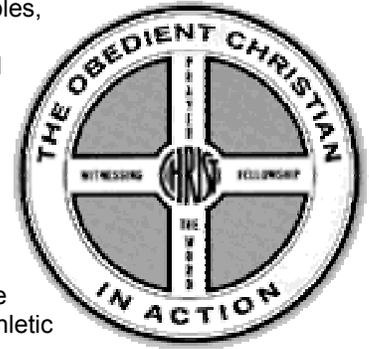
Include?

Exclude?)

What Elements essential?

The Christian Life Wheel Illustration

God is at work in the hearts and lives of believers, building them into disciples, making them over into the image of Christ. The work of sanctification is a work in which the believer participates. (1 Peter 1:23-2:5 Phil 1:6,9-11, Phil 2:12,13f, Rom 6, 8:9-13) Dawson Trotman of the Navigators developed an illustration called the Christian Life Wheel. Its center is Christ, its four spokes are the **Word of God, Prayer, Fellowship** with other believers, (which scripturally includes the fully developed concept of the church,) and **Witness** and testimony to the world – these are all means by which we grow as Christians. Its rim is the Christian in action – living day-by-day in obedience and service. This study is an extended practical examination of these four basic elements of Christian Discipleship. Along with these, we will also consider a couple of Biblical models for Christian Living: that of athletic **Discipline**; and that a Soldier wearing the **Armor of God**.



Our concern is to consider practical ways we can, with God's help, strengthen these areas in our Christian lives. One basic tool is a "Spiritual Notebook". Writing down our insights from the Word, the lessons gained in our daily "battles" and experiences; recording what God is doing day-by-day in us and prayer concerns and answers in a notebook can fix these in our hearts and make them available for future meditation and strengthening. Sections for recording devotional insights, Sermon notes, prayer matters can be made in any notebook - the form is not nearly as crucial as regular use.

We need to devote ourselves to The Word of God

The Use of **God's Word** must be stressed (Psa 119,19:7-14,2 Tim 3:16,17)

The Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 155 says *"The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners, of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ, of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to His will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto Salvation."*

The Hand Illustration:

HEAR: We need to take every opportunity to hear the Word proclaimed. To keep the word and not allow it to be "plucked" from our ears, we should develop a habit of taking Sermon notes - Practice improves our note-taking, avoid doodling. Keep your notes (best to use a notebook rather than the back of bulletin.) I can review sermons which I heard two decades ago, unfortunately many more recent sermons, I neglected to take any notes.

The Westminster Larger Catechism #160 *"It is required of those who hear the Word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear by the Scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate and confer of it, hide it in their hearts, and bring forth fruit of it in their lives."*

READ: Reading God's Word ought to be a daily practice, just as eating is a day by day necessity. Christian malnutrition and lack of growth comes about as spiritual nourishment is neglected. It is better to be systematic, rather than using the "lucky dip" system. A Psalm a day, or the Gospels are good places to start. Have you read the entire Bible through? There are a number of plans where you can do it in a year, with out getting bogged down in Leviticus. Don't substitute devotional materials for the Bible itself.

INSPECT the Word: Ask yourself these questions as you read:

- Is there Insights about God?
- Are there **Needs** for Prayer?
- Are there **Sins** I need to confess?
 - Or **Promises** I can claim?
- Do I find **Examples** to Follow?
 - Or **Commands** to Obey?
- Are there **Traps** and **Temptations** to avoid?

STUDY: Both on your own and in fellowship with others. There are lots of ways you can dig deeper into the Word in order to understand and apply it better. (2 Tim 2:15 Acts 17:11) Concordance studies, books studies, character studies, theme studies, background studies, chapter analysis etc. To be effective your study should be regular and systematic, it should also be "pass-on able" -the results written and perhaps shared. Doing extra work on your own in conjunction with a Bible Study group or Sunday School class or following up on questions or thoughts uncovered while reading your Bible are good study starting points. Equally fruitful and demanding more personal discipline is teaching a Study or Sunday School class yourself. No one learns more than the teacher in preparation week after week.

MEMORIZE: (Psa 119:11) The Word hidden in our hearts is available at all times We can meditate upon it while driving or waiting in line at the market, it can keep us from fallen prey to temptation and sin, and we can share it with others when the opportunity arises. Scripture memory is a never ending discipline - it requires frequent, almost constant review. The more you do it, the easier it becomes - the difficulty is often most evident in doing it. Accountability helps - covenant with another to spur each other on, carry memory cards, paste verses on the dashboard, bathroom mirror, or over the sink. Resources for verses to memorize: Sermon passages, devotional reading - keep a list of verses you would like to memorize in your notebook; where it can be frequently and readily added to and consulted. Don't try too much- a verse a week is often more than most of us can handle. The variety of Bible versions used today is a problem -settle on one you use.

MEDITATION: This is the thumb that combined with hearing, reading, study and memorizing gives the good grip. Time for reflection and pondering and prayer over the word is essential. (Psa 119:97, Psa 1:2, Psa 11:14) The Quiet Time is a good time for this, but how many opportunities do we "busy modern people" have and so often waste. Driving to work, waiting in queues, coffee breaks, Television "junk", Sunday afternoons, doing yard work, or nursing a baby. The "fingers" make the word available for our pondering thoughts, the "thumb" digests and draws the nourishment from them. (Phil 4:8,9)

We need to devote ourselves to Prayer:

Prayer is talking' with God. It is *"an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of His Spirit, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies."* (Westminster Larger Catechism # 178)

Our times of prayer should include these four elements **A. C. T. S.**

Adoration- reflecting on God Himself and His attributes.

Confession- confessing our sins and trusting in His grace in Christ.

Thanksgiving -acknowledging our salvation and thanking Him for His grace day-by-day and the answers He gives our prayers .

Supplication -lifting up our needs and the needs of His people and the Gospel to Him.

We have a model for our prayers in the Lord's prayer. The Larger and Shorter Catechisms have much that they can offer to our prayer life as we meditate on the questions pertaining to the Lord's prayer. The use of a notebook can enhance our prayer life considerably. There should be several things in the prayer section:

A Prayer Calendar giving regular attention to particular concerns or individuals – each day of the month including leaders, ministries, missionaries, etc.

A Two Column listing of Specific Requests and Answers. It is surprising to look back and see how truly God has heard and answered our prayers. We can see god's wisdom and faithfulness in a newer light or see ourselves growing or needing maturity.

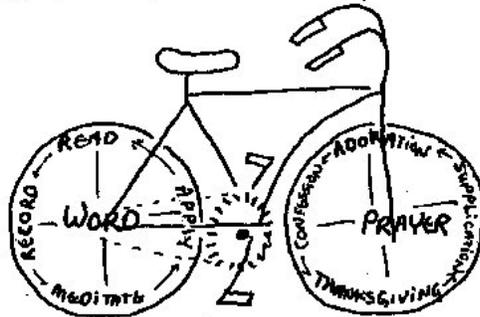
A Third section could include Special Requests we ought to be praying for. This could be loose leaf so we can remove pages when the requests are no longer current in order that we won't neglect needs in the clutter.

Prayer should always be a part of our corporate life -we should gather regularly to pray together, we ought to keep other's requests before us as well. Keep a copy of your prayer calendar or prayer list in your wallet, purse, pocket. When you're stuck with idle moments, waiting, etc, pray some **in** the midst of the business of the day.

A way to put the Word and Prayer together on a daily basis is the QUIET TIME.

Often the spiritual barometer of our Christian lives that time of devotional fellowship with the Lord. When we are endeavouring to meet regularly with the Lord we experience real growth and progress - as we neglect it - spiritual doldrums set in. We may find our selves going in circles.

Our devotional life can be represented with a Bicycle :



It is notable that in Scripture so many of God's people had a regular time in the morning of worship - including the Lord himself. (Gen 19:21, Exo 34:2, Psa 5:3 Dan 6:10 Mark 1:35) The key elements are a time set aside (Early morning preferred) A quiet place (where you can read and pray without interruptions) A systematic approach (the pattern in the wheels- the notebook is so useful here - jot down your meditation and thoughts, the passage read, your prayer requests) Also apparent - getting doing is not easy, practice improves. You can expect difficulties, very likely you will fall off. (Easily remedied - just pick yourself up and get back on) There will be obstacles and interruptions. Even the Lord was interrupted). But to have it, you need to be tuning the pedals. And we need the Lord's help if we are to learn how to ride it.

We need to devote ourselves to FELLOWSHIP: One Another

One Christian study guide on the Christian life defines Fellowship as "*comradeship, companionship, a relation in which parties hold something in common, mutual sharing or friendly association.*" Some one has said, in the Christian context, that "*fellowship is two fellows on the same ship going in the same direction.*" For too many Christians this is their comprehension of fellowship but this definition seems to be lacking some key elements that the Bible teaches. To be sure fellowship includes this kind of social sharing based on a common faith, but for many Christians fellowship is polite talk on Sunday mornings and occasional church socials and very little more. Biblical fellowship is much deeper and very important to Spiritual growth. A study of the "One Another" passages of the Scripture reveals there is much much more to fellowship.

1 Jn 1:3 is often referred to in describing Christian fellowship. The basis of our fellowship one with another is the gospel that saves us. Our fellowship with one another begins with the fellowship with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit which starts when we, in repentance and faith, are redeemed. We have a deep intimate fellowship (the word for fellowship was often used to describe the marriage relationship in Greek) with God (1 Jn 1:3, 1Cor 1:9, Phil 2:1). Our fellowship with each other should have the same kind of openness and honesty that our relationship with God has - just as our fellowship with one other is to be one of loving and bearing with one another even He has loved and forgiven us (1 Peter 1:21-23, 1 Jn 4:7ff, Eph 4:31-5:2, etc.)

The key passage describing Christian fellowship in the Scriptures is Acts 2:42.

The early church in Jerusalem "devoted themselves constantly to the instruction and fellowship of the apostles, to the breaking of bread (worship-communion) and prayers". It is further amplified in the verses following, including vs 44 "And all who believed - that is, who adhered to and trusted in and Felled on Jesus Christ -were united, and together they had everything in common." The Word for fellowship in the Greek, "*Koinonia*" means just that - a sharing with one another. The stress is not on the sharing of goods, but rather of faith, of worship, of burdens, of instruction in the word and prayer. Unity is important. Phi12:1ff.

THE SCRIPTURAL CONCEPT of the Church

The fellowship we need is found in the church. As we involve ourselves in the common shared life, as we give of ourselves and give ourselves for one another, as we commit ourselves to one another, we nurture Christian growth. We must be more than fellow travellers bound for glory -rather like two climbers roped together, scaling the same cliff, depending on one another; pulling one another along, sharing joy and pain and obstacles and the ultimate victory'-our fellowship is one of mutual commitment and submission, love and forbearance. Our fellowship equips us for Christian living (Eph 4:11-16). we prod and encourage one another on. (Hebr 10:24,~ All this contributes to the growth of Christian character (2 Peter 1:5-11, Rom 12) as we worship together and bring praise to God. (Col 3:17-17, Rom 15:5,6)

Scriptural terminology of the church:

"Ekklesia" (Greek) meaning "assembly, congregation" Used 115 times. Signifies those who have been "called out" of the world to be His.

"People of God" An expression rich in Old Testament significance. I Peter 2:9, IOJ Titus 2:14 (cf. Exo 19:8-6, 15:13J Deut 32:9-12) (cf. the concepts: Vineyard (Isa 5:1f, Matt 23:33!) and Remnant (Isa 35) h5, Rom 9:22f,II)

"Body of Christ" (I Cor 12:27t Eph 1:20-22t I Peter 2:5)

"Kingdom of God" (Matt 16:18,19; cf. 18:18, Rev 1:6, Col1:13, Phil 3:20, Hebr 13:14) Not equated with the church, but God manifests His dominion or rule in the church, and in the Gospel.)

"Building, Temple" (Matt 16:18, Eph 2:20-22, I Peter 2:5)

"Flock" (I Peter 5:2,4; John 10:1-18, Jere 23:1-8)

"Bride of Christ" (Eph 5:23-24, OT Isa 61:10-62:5, Ezek 16:88, Hosea) (Rev 19,20,22)

"Household of God" (Eph 2:19, Gal 5:10)

"Inheritance" (Eph 1:18)

"Dwelling place of the Spirit" (Eph 2:22)

The "Invisible church" consists of the whole number of those who have been chosen of God unto salvation and redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. The church is made visible when believers are visible, As they profess" their faith before the world, manifest holy lives and separate themselves from worldliness~ they make it manifest. But it is clear from Scripture that the Lord manifests the church in visible, external organizations for the work it is commissioned to perform. To the degree it faithfully manifests the pure gospel, true worship and faithfully administers the ordinances of baptism and communion, is the church visible. *"This visible unity of the body of Christ, though obscured, is not destroyed by its division into different denominations of professing Christians; but all of these which maintain the Word and the Sacraments in their fundamental integrity are to be recognized as true branches of the Church of Jesus Christ."* *"It is according to Scriptural example that the Church should be divided into many individual churches"* (PCA, Book of Church Order, 2-2,3)

The visible church is very important in the life of His people. It is both necessary (indispensable) and has a permanent place in God's activity with man (indestructible).

The church is indispensable to believers (Eph 3:10; 4:16; 5:27) These verses indicate that God's purposes are being brought to pass through the church. The church is God's channel through which we are growing into the image of Christ, the fullness of Him. The Great Commission entrusts to the church the gospel ministry "until the end of the age". It is a viable church: proclaiming, discipling, baptizing, teaching.

Church membership in a local congregation is not specifically commanded in the Bible, but the concept is implied throughout. Much of the N.T. is written to local churches, with officers and members. The relationships presumed by the Bible are based upon commitment and accountability, such as is a part of membership, to other Christians and to the church's leaders (Hebr 13:1,11, Acts 20:28).

The Scriptural obligation should be seen in the light of its spiritual benefits to the believer. In God's will, it is an important means of growth for the believer. The Christian who is in subjection to other believers (Eph 5:21) and to the elders who have responsibility for his or her spiritual welfare. It is the means by which God feeds us from His word (Acts 2:42) and it equips us for service as believers (Eph 4:11-13). The Bible teaches that God distributes talents and gifts among believers to be used for the whole body of the church (Rom 12 I Cor 12). The gifts of individual believers are needed by the whole and the individual believers need the ministry of the rest of the body. The church is the framework of our fellowship with one another (Hebrews 10:23-25). The whole body works together in its ministry to the world (I Thess 1:6f, I Cor 3:9). It is through the church that believers maintain and establish regularity in their spiritual lives. It is the church that maintains regular worship, regular observance of the Lord's ordinances, regular fellowship, and regular discipline.

The Christian life is not lived in a vacuum. It is a life of involvement with others. The believer is drawn out of him or herself and becomes intimately involved with others. Each day is a working out of faith and love and obedience. Christ says the mark of the Christian is love. It is in the living fellowship of the church that love ceases to be a vague feeling and becomes both a challenge and a reality. Our faith is daily put to the test as we are constantly in situations demanding we "love one another". (Rom 12:9ff., Phil 2:1-4, Col. 3:12ff. Christ prayed for the unity of His own. (Jn 17) That unity also must be lived out, worked out, made visible day by day. Not the unity of organization -- but the living unity of an organism where the members are "a body composed of different organs or parts performing special functions that are mutually dependent and essential to life". (Eph 4:1-16) (This passage also reveals the organizational nature of the church) The Scriptures exhort us to mutual submission and discipline. (Hebr 10:24,25, Eph 4:25-5:2, 7-21, I Thess 5:11.-14.) This discipline is positive, aimed at making us a holy and obedient people as we exhort and encourage one another in the faith and concerning the manner of our lives, though to the church too is given discipline of a more severe form (Matt 16:18,19, I Cor 5 of II Cor 2) A. part of the ministry of the church is to guard the flock. (Acts 20:28-31 The truth must be taught and proclaimed, False teaching must be exposed by the Word of God (II Tim 2:14-J:16j 1:13,14, I Tim 1:3-1,4:1-16)

Along with the teaching that the church is indispensable comes the teaching that it is indestructible. (I Cor 11:16, Matt 16:18) God did not spare His son (Rom 8:31f) in order that the church might be sanctified (Rom 5:23). It is indestructible because God cares for it, guards it and preserves it, at times, even from weaknesses within, as well as those enemies without.

We Must be Devoted to Witness

The fourth spoke of the Christian life wheel is witness. Just as Fellowship represents the believer's horizontal relationships with other Christians, witness relates to his relationship to the world of unbelievers. Christ says: "You are my witnesses Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

The Scriptures use several words to describe this aspect of a Christian's life Careful word study or them reveals the direction and dimensions of witness.

The first word is "*martereo*": "to bear witness"; along with "*marturia*" "witness, testimony" .The word is the root of our word "martyr" and has reference as well to the giving of testimony in a courtroom. It relates to giving witness to the facts and personal experience. (See Matt 18:16, Acts 1:8, 5:32, Jn 5:31-39, 15:26,27) Witness is "borne before the World by the Father to the Son through the Spirit and the church." (Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*, p.69) The Christian is presenting his Lord to an unbelieving world, defending Him, commending Him, giving forth the evidence which must be heard and considered by an unbelieving, sin-darkened world . "How is the Christian to act when faced with the opposition of this world?.. He is to bravely bear witness to Jesus Christ before the world in the power of the Holy Spirit It is because of the unbelieving world's opposition to Christ that the church's witness to Christ is needed." (Stott, p. 63) The biblical concept of witness assumes personal firsthand experience of salvation through Jesus Christ. Just as Paul, who had no personal, eyewitness experience of Jesus until the Damascus road, was a witness to Christ, So are we.

(Acts 26:16) "We are personally involved with Him, his revelation and redemption has changed our lives. We are witnesses, SO we must bear witness." (Stott, p. 74)

The second word is "euangelizo" which means to proclaim good news, preach, proclaim. Along with it is the word "evangel" – the Gospel, good news. This is the root of our word "evangelism". God is proclaiming good news, salvation is offered to those who repent and believe. (Luke 2:10, Acts 8:4, Rom 10:15) The key element in this word is the joyful, positive proclaiming of salvation. Paul says "I am not ashamed of the Gospel (evangel) for it is the power of God for salvation for every one who believes." (Rom 1:16 cf. 1 Cor 1:17-18) The Gospel originates with God (Gal 1:11,12) It is this word that brings out a clear world wide thrust to the proclamation of Christ. (2 Cor 10:13-16, Mark 13:10, 16:15, Matt 24:14.)

The third word is the word "kerusso" to preach, herald" the "kerygma" is the content of this preaching.—The word means to announce, make known, to spread a story widely (Mk 1:4.) The Arndt/Gingrich Lexicon says it portrays the "*herald, a messenger vested with public authority, who conveyed the messages of kings, magistrates, princes, military commanders or who gave public summons of demands.*" It conveys the idea of blowing a trumpet. It is "telling news to people who have not heard it before." God is making an appeal, issuing a summons through the Christian. The Christian is His ambassador. (2 Cor.5:18-20) The content of this preaching, proclaiming is important. It is Christ "crucified" (1 Cor 1:23), Christ "Saviour" (Rom 4:25), Christ "Lord" (2 Cor 4:5). It is the "*proclamation of the death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, that led to an evaluation of His person as both Lord and Christ, and confronted man with the necessity of repentance and the promised forgiveness of sins.*" (Stott, p. 39, quoting Mounce) Stott suggests simply the Kerygma has two parts: first the proclamation of Jesus as Saviour and Lord. The second part is the appeal to men and women to come to Him in repentance and faith." (p.41) The driving force of this word is its seeking for a response. "*proclamation and appeal belong together, we must not separate them.*" Presenting Christ is presenting the urgent demand of repentance and faith.(Mk 1:15; Isa 55:6,7; 2 Cor 5:20)

In the Scriptures, witness must not be restricted to just what is commonly called "witnessing;" today. "Too much so called testimony today is really autobiography and even sometimes thinly disguised self-advertisement."(Stott p.64) It is biblically much more than passing out tracts, door-to-door courage and stumbling presentations. It is bearing witness, joyful proclamation of good news, announcing and appealing to men and women on behalf of Christ.

Witnessing's dimensions include:

- 1. Living our lives in Christ and for Christ before the world.** (Tit 2:7,8, 11-15; Eph 4:17ff (cf Col 3) 2 Cor 3:18-4:10, 1 Peter 2:12, 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, Eph 5:3-6.) Our spoken witness must be corroborated on one hand by the authority of personal experience, and on the other on the strength of the evidence of a consistent life. We are to live as citizens of heaven (Phil 3:17-20) This will put us in conflict with the world, and may raise up opposition to us. Our actions must not drown out the testimony of our words.
- 2. Witness is given as we confront and expose darkness and sin, in the light of God's Word, asserting God's authority and honour.** (Eph 5:7-20, Gal 6:7-10, Rom 6:17-20, Col 2:25ff.) It is the "bad news" that gives urgency to proclaiming the "good news". Exposing and convicting sin and wickedness is a constant part of the Christian battle.
- 3. We should seek to reach and persuade unbelievers with the good news, recognizing that God alone can convince them of the truth.** "We must do our utmost to give people good reasons why they should believe [recognizing] that it is the Holy Spirit who opens their minds to attend to the evidence." (Machen) Stott points out, "some of the verbs which Luke uses in the Acts to describe the apostles preaching are decidedly intellectual, i.e. teach, argue, dispute, confound, prove, confute powerfully. (See Acts 20:31, 17:2,17; 18:4,19; 19:8,9; 24:25; 9:29,22; 17:3, 9:22, 18:28)" (p.55) He points out that as a result of this preaching and teaching people were "persuaded". We see Paul spending two years in Ephesus in a rented hall spending hour each day reasoning and arguing for the Truth. (Eph 19:8-10) There is room for *apologetics*, and defending the truth, as well as *elencitics*, which is exposing the lie in false systems of philosophy and religion. This, however, must be tempered by the Scriptures: (1 Cor 1:17-31, 1 Thess 2:1-13)
- 4. We are concerned primarily sharing the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, bringing testimony to what He has done in our lives, delivering us from sin and bringing us back to God in repentance and faith.** (Rom 1:16,17; Col 4:5,6; 1 Peter 3:15; 1 Thess 1:7-10, 2:4-14) The

word studies on "Witness, evangelise, preach" make this clear. God's purpose is to reach a lost world with the "good news" of Salvation in Christ. We are the ones to take it to them. (Rom 10:8-17) In sharing Christ we have a basic message: all men are sinners, unable to please God (Rom 3: 23, 6:23). God's Son came in human flesh and took our sins, dying in our place (John 3:16; Rom 5:8) We are to turn from our sins and believe (trust) in Him for salvation John 1;11,12, 5:24) and we will have eternal life. (John 10:27,28)

5. Finally there is the witness of loving and serving – sharing God's love with deeds as well as words. This may take many forms as we show in love and forbearance and forgiveness what God offers. Diaconal ministries, medical missions, apple-pie evangelism, concern for the poor and needy, and rescue missions -- all these set the stage, open the doors for the word of salvation. Deeds must not replace words, but neither should they be left out. (James 1:27)

Scriptural Models for Witness

Finally in our consideration of witness, we will look at a few of the Scriptural models for it. They give some practical guidance to us in being witnesses for Him.

One significant series of examples are found in John 1 –as the initial responses of the disciples to Jesus are recorded. John the Baptist points two of his disciples to Jesus (vss 35-36) They follow and personally come to know Him. Then Andrew sought out Peter. John (the other disciple) probably sought out his brother James, though John modestly doesn't include this. Philip "immediately" sought out Nathaniel. We see new believers sharing Christ. They shared: 1. their own experience. 2. the basic gospel (we have found the Messiah, we have found Him of whom Moses and also the Prophets wrote). There was a sense of priority, and enthusiasm. They brought people to Jesus. They said what they could and weren't dismayed by scepticism.

We have the example of Jesus Himself with a series of individuals in the Gospel of John. Jesus and Nicodemus -arousing his curiosity, gently but firmly pointing him clearly to the one to be lifted up for sin. "You must be born again". With the Woman at the well - a marvellous example of gently exposing the needs of a sinful heart, presenting the Truth and not being sidetracked into opinion~ and arguments, cutting across social barriers, communicating love and worth from the beginning, pointing her clearly to the living water- the messiah. She immediately got up and sought out her villagers, and brought them to Him to hear.

We have the preaching and sharing of the Apostles in Acts - giving testimony to Jesus crucified, buried, risen, exalted. Dealing with the arguments of the Jews, the opposition, crossing barrier, after barrier, carrying a message of salvation from Judea to Samaria to Asia, Greece and Rome. "Everyone went everywhere preaching the Gospel. (Acts 8:4) Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. Paul and the Philippian Jailer.

Then there is Paul. Acts records his testimony several times- the account of his conversion, how he is a witness to Jesus Christ, Saviour and Lord. Perhaps there is a practical outline of what we can say.

What I was before I knew Christ as Lord and Saviour!
What God has done for me in Jesus Christ on the cross .
How God has changed me and what it is to live in Him!

The worldwide vision, the joy, the enthusiasm, the proclamation of the Gospel trumpeted forth seems lacking in today's churches and believers. We ought to devote ourselves to bearing witness to the World. We are God's messengers, His ambassadors, sent by Him to proclaim His Gospel to a world desperately in need of Salvation.

It begins with us. Praying for those we know and meet each day. Praying for opportunity to share with them. Preparing ourselves to present the gospel that we might be ready when the opportunity comes. "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always be ready to make a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing which you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame".." (I Peter 3:15,16). Share often with your brothers and sisters in Christ the outworking of grace in your lives. Build bridges with unbelievers.

And lift up your eyes to the World. You have a part in this outreach as you send forth labourers into the harvest, as you pray for them regularly and support them in their labours .

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHEEL: Disciplining the Christian's Life

Discussion: What is discipline? What are the characteristics of a poorly disciplined life? Of a well disciplined life? Where is discipline most important in a Christian's life? What factors make daily discipline in spiritual things difficult for us?

What does the Lord have to say about a disciplined spiritual life:

2 Tim 1:7 "...a spirit of power, love and self-discipline." cf. vs 6 "Fan the flames"

1 Cor 9:24 "run in such a way as to get the prize." "...everyone who competes goes into strict training." "...a crown that will last forever..." "I do not run aimlessly or fight like a man beating air. No I beat my body and make it my slave so that ...I will not be disqualified for the prize."

Phil 3:12-15 "I press on to take hold forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal." (cf vss 17-21, cf.3: 7-11!)

Hebrews 5:14 "...solid food for the mature who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

1 Tim 4: 6-8, 15 "train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." "Be diligent in these matters ; give yourself wholly to them, so everyone can see your progress. Watch your life and your doctrine closely. Persevere in them..." cf. vs 12 "set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."

2 Tim 3:3-1,15f "People will be...without self control... having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."
"continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of. ..."

2 Tim 2:3-7, 15 "endure hardship like a good soldier... not involved in civilian affairs- wants to please commanding officer." "athlete" "farmer"
"do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.. "

2 Tim 2:22 "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who can on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Hebr 6:9-12 "show the same diligence to the end" "not to be lazy, but imitate."

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Observations on discipline:

1. Goal orientated -motivation comes from fixing our eyes on Jesus and His righteousness, pleasing Him.
2. Has a sense of values and priorities - Saying "no" to many things that might hinder or harm our spiritual growth. Not wasting our time, energy and resources. Making the most of our opportunities.
3. Is a constant; never relaxing effort.
4. Proper input is very important- The Christian needs solid food for growth.
5. Proper output: proper exercise. Regular exercise. This applies to the four spokes: Word, prayer; fellowship, witness.
6. Everyone in training needs to be managed - and managed well.

It can be seen from this study of the role and value of discipline in a believer's life that discipline is the rigorous task of working out the model of the Christian life in our daily living. The illustration of the athlete is very help here. We have a goal, we commit ourselves to it; we have the motivation and "work out" accordingly. Spiritual training like athletic training means not wasting time and opportunity, not "pigging out" on "junk food". It means holding fast to the Standard lest we be disqualified. There is no room for thinking that the Christian life will come about easily or can be achieved with a minimum of effort. Our manager, our source of power and direction is Jesus.

CHRISTIAN LIFE WHEEL: The Whole Armour of God Model- Another Perspective.

Illustrations often fall short of giving a full and complete picture. The Christian life wheel illustration gives us the basic elements of the Christian walk, and is the basic Scriptural model, based on Acts 2.

The Athletic illustration which gives us an understanding of the place of discipline in the Christian life gives us further perspective on "working it out" on Goal orientation and priorities. Another prominent Scriptural illustration is that of the fully equipped Soldier - ready for the Christian warfare. This model is found in three basic passages: Eph 6:10-20; 1 Thess 5:6-8f, Romans 13:12-14.

It is the armour model that helps us understand the difficulty of Christian living, the need for dependence on God's provisions and power, the perspective of warfare and conflict which requires us to stand firm. It puts faith, hope and love in their proper place as essential elements of the Christian walk.

To begin it first shows us that we live in the midst of a great spiritual conflict. Satan is actively and subversively opposing God and His grace at work within us. The Christian life is more than a struggle with our own human frailty and fallen nature and tendency toward laziness. We wrestle against "the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph 6:12) We have to take a stand against the devil's schemes and treachery (Eph 6:11). Ephesians 2:1-3 reveals that we were all once under the hegemony of Satan, 4:14,17-24ff reveals the struggle with the darkness is a moral struggle, 5:3-16 exhorts us to live as children of the light "for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth" and to have nothing to do with the "fruitless deeds of darkness."

We are struggling against a master of deceit, evil, and wickedness who opposes us constantly -at times bringing hordes of opposition, at others subtly whispering and luring us astray on the pretence of trickery. On Satan see I Peter 5:8 Acts 20:29,30, Jn 8:44, Rom 16:20. On the struggle with the bondage of sin see Jn 8:34-36, I Jn 2:19,20, 2 Peter 2:1ff. On temptation see I Cor 10:1-13, James 1:12-18, I Jn 2:15-17, Matt 4:1-10, James 4:7. Satan knows our weak points and our strong points and spares no effort at using them against us. He tries to turn us from God, from faith to despair or rebellion. No wonder living as a Christian is so difficult -there are traps and snares set for us, powerful opponents ready to pounce. The armour reveals how essential we must have God's help, His provisions for the conflict and the spiritual nature of the conflict.



Secondly the nature of the Armour teaches us that God has made a provision for us in this spiritual conflict. We are to "be strong in the Lord and His mighty power." We have a "spiritual" armour: the Belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet shod with the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit. Study of the armour in the scriptures is rich. Ultimately our armour is found in Christ.

The belt for example is that which holds up, supports the sword. Interpreters suggest this could be either the objective truth of the gospel or the sincerity of the Christian life. Finally however it is the same belt that girded our saviour, Isa 11 :5. The breastplate covers the heart, back and vital organs. The passage in Ephesians calls it the breastplate of righteousness, Thessalonians of Faith and love - appropriate because faith working; itself out in love is righteousness. Isa 59:17 makes it clear that our saviour was clothed in righteousness and the helmet of salvation as well. The helmet protects the mind, the governing centre of life. We have the helmet of the hope of salvation (Rom 13:12). Christ has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. I Cor. 1:30.

The armour thirdly stresses that faith, hope and other spiritual qualities are essential aspects of a Christian's life. The shield of faith is a good example. It is able to quench the fiery arrows of the wicked one. (Eph 6:16) 2 Cor 4 & 5 teaches us much about the role and importance of faith. "We

have this treasure in jars of clay to show this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (4:7) Appearances make our lives seem defeated and weak, "outwardly we are wasting away yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" "we live by faith, not by sight" "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." If Satan brings the whisper of guilt and failure to our hearts, "this is how we know we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us, For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." (I John 3:19,20) "He has given us new birth into a living hope...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in heaven for you who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation..." (I Peter 1:3-5)

Twice we are exhorted in Eph 6:10 and 13 to put on the "whole armour of God. The word here is "panoply"- a word used to describe a fully equipped, heavily armoured foot soldier. Paul must have spent much time observing and learning about a soldier's craft, chained to Rome's finest. We can't afford to neglect these spiritual virtues- they are all important in Christian living. Cf. I Cor 13:13, 2 Peter 1:5-11, I Tim 6:11,12.

The fourth stress of the Armour illustration is the emphasis of standing firm and vigilant in the midst of spiritual conflict. Eph 6:12, 13, 14; 1 Thess 5:6. A soldier, in times of war, must be constantly ready to do battle, alert, prepared. "Be well-balanced, temperate, sober minded; be vigilant and cautious at all times for that enemy of yours, the devil, roams around like a lion roaring [in fierce hunger] seeking someone to seize upon and devour. Withstand him, be firm in faith [against his onset], rooted, established, strong, immovable and determined." (1 Peter 5:8 Ampl). A number of word studies amplify for us this perspective on Christian living.

1. We are to Stand Firm, be steadfast, strong. 1 Cor 16:13, Eph 6:10. Like a Roman phalanx, firmly set. Steadfast: 1 Peter 5:9 like a tough weed firmly rooted, yet flexible. 1 Cor 10:12, 13. Warning – don't slip into laxity like the Americans at Pearl Harbour in 1941. "So if you think you are standing firm – take heed that you do not fall! . . . if you are tempted, He will provide a way out so you can stand up under it." Phil 1:27-29. "stand firm in one spirit 1 Cor 15:58. "Let nothing move you always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. Col 1:22, 23 "If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the Gospel.

2. We are to be Sober, self-controlled, calm, collected and circumspect.

I Peter 5:8. I Peter 1:13-16. We are not to be "drunken" (1 Thess 5:4-7)but of the Day. The climax of the battle, the coming of the Day of the Lord, is yet before us. See also I Tim 3:2,11; 4:5; Tit 2:2. The same word root underlies "to fast", Fasting - not given to excess, as Belshazzar and Babylon were unprepared when Cyrus had surrounded the walls, but keeping our senses sharp. Self-controlled, see 2 Peter 1:6 were it follows "knowledge" I Cor 9:25 the athlete. Tit 1:8 quality of maturity, elder-material. " To be sober means to be filled with spiritual and moral earnestness, being neither overly excited on one hand, nor indifferent on the other, but calm, steady and sane, doing one's duty and fulfilling one's ministry.

3. We are to be watchful, alert, both morally and spiritually. This and the preceding word are used almost as synonyms in both 1 Thess 5:6 and 1 Peter 5:8. Cf 1 Cor 16:13,14. The uncertainty of our day and of the Lord's Return demands watchfulness (Matt 24:42 and the parables following). We are to be "dressed and ready for service." (Luke 12:35). Our robes girded up ready for travel. We are to be watchful because we are surrounded by foes, seen and unseen, threatening us and the Flock of God. (Acts 20:31) We have to be spiritually awake (I Thess 5). Interestingly, "Watch" is a word associated with prayer often in Scripture. (Col 4:2, cf. Mk 14:32-41.)

4. We are to Resist the devil, stand fast against the foe. James 4 :7, I Peter 5:8 We are to be set against the onset of his attacks I Peter 5:9 (Ampl). We are to be dug in, set in the strategic places, determined and ready for the fight. Our ammunition is laid out. The weapons as we shall see are the Word and prayer. The manoeuvrability of the Roman legions was their strength. Our feet are shod with the gospel of peace – a peace with God that Satan cannot outflank. A number of words in the Greek convey this concept - all compounds build on the prefix "anti". We are to stand "against", be set "against". The way to resist is seen in I Cor 10:13, and in "casting ourselves on God with humility" 1 Peter 5 :6,7,10-11. The Armour which God provides is necessary in this battle. Our Lord resisted temptation with Scripture (Matt 4) and prayer (Matt 6:1). We overcome evil with good. Rom 12:9-21.

5. We are to Persevere, endure, be patient until the end. The word means to remain, continue unshaken. James 1:2-4 (note God's provision vs 5,6) I Peter 1:5-9. "faith...proved genuine". Hebrews 12:2-7, 12. Who can separate us from Christ -- we are overwhelming conquerors in Him Rom 8: 35- 39 .He will not let us fall. Jude 24,25. Our perseverance is a sign of victory Phil 1:28. Allied with the idea of perseverance is the concept of faithfulness. 2 Tim 2:11-13, Even where we fail, He remains faithful. No one can snatch us out of the Lord's hand. In 10:27-29.

The fifth observation we can make about the Armour is the offensive weapons are the Sword of the Spirit (cf Hebrews 4:12) which is the Word of God and prayer. We are to be good swordsmen, able to parry the thrusts of the evil one with the words of life and truth, but beyond that the proclamation and preaching of the word of God is the channel through which the spirit moves, convincing men of sin, opening hearts to the Gospel (John 16:8) He also opens up the word to Us (jn 14:26) and inspired the Scriptures (II Tim 3:16). We are to be "instant in season and out" 2 Tim 2:2).

Prayer is important too. It is the way God's power is drawn into our lives. It brings us wisdom (James 1:5) It gives us boldness. (Acts 4:23ff) Paul stresses it repeatedly. See especially Eph 6:19,20. Alertness, watchfulness, prayer (6:18)

We are to be prepared. The preparation of the Gospel of peace has two parts as our feet are shod. The first is defensive- we must have peace with God and that only through the gospel (Rom 1:16,17; 5:1), the second-offensive (Cf Isa 53:1, Rom 10:15ff.) We are equipped with the words of life, the good news to proclaim, we go forth girded with prayer for our own boldness and for the ones who need the message of salvation (I Tim 2:1-3,7).

The Armour puts Christ and His power into its proper place in the centre of the Christian's life. Necessary and essential, because the Christian life is one of conflict beyond our strength, we must have God's whole armour on. Perhaps you should do as some have done and put a reminder on the bathroom mirror for each day: "HAVE YOU GOT YOUR ARMOUR ON?"