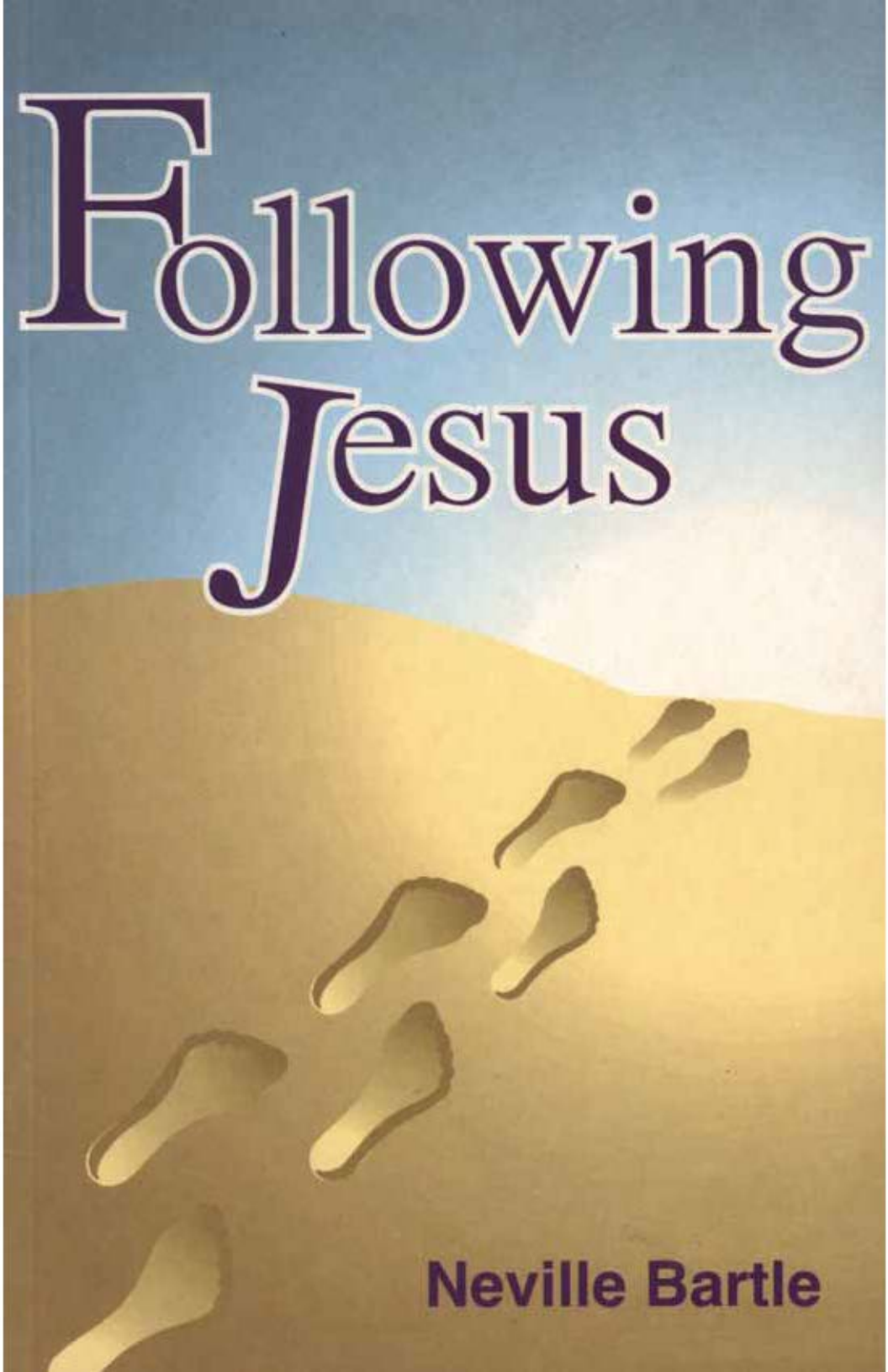


# Following Jesus



**Neville Bartle**

# Following Jesus

Millions of people have heard the story of Jesus. Thousands have watched the film that shows the story of Jesus. But it is not enough to know about who Jesus was, you can also know Jesus as a real live friend who wants to transform your life and live with you. He wants to take out of your life all the bad habits and wrong attitudes that spoil your life. He wants to cleanse your heart and mind from all that is dirty, ugly or selfish. Jesus wants to fill you with peace, joy and love for God and for other people as well.

Many years ago Jesus called people to become his followers or disciples. Today Jesus wants you to be his follower also. This book will teach you how you can be a good follower of Jesus and how Jesus can walk beside you every day of your life.

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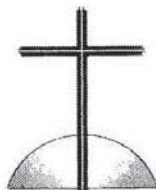


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Neville Bartle

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# Chapter 1

## Following Jesus

Jesus is the most amazing man who ever lived, and today over one billion people from every country in the world and speaking hundreds of different languages, claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. But who was this man and what did he do that so many people meet together week by week to worship him? Many would rather die than give up their faith in him. They claim that he is just as alive today as he was 2000 years ago. What makes Jesus so special?

The Bible says that Jesus is no ordinary person, in fact it says that Jesus is the Son of Almighty God. Jesus existed before the world began and was involved in creating this amazing universe in which we live. Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God ... for through Him God created everything in heaven and on earth (Colossians 1:15-16). But into God's beautiful creation came sin, disobedience and with it jealousy, lying, deceit, envy, hatred, murder and all sorts of evil. Violence, disease, death and decay spoiled the beautiful world that God had formed. The Bible shows us that it was for this reason that Jesus left the glory of heaven to come to this earth to get rid of evil and bring peace, health and new life to this world.

"The Son of God appeared ... to destroy what the devil has done" (1 John 3:8). Jesus said, "The thief comes only in order to steal, kill and destroy; I have come in order that you might have life; life in all his fullness" (John 10:10).

Jesus left his heavenly throne and came to this earth to be born as a baby by a virgin called Mary. He grew up in a small village and no doubt attended a village school. He became a village carpenter like his earthly father Joseph. But when he became 30 he left his home village and became a travelling preacher and healer. Crowds flocked to hear him and to see the miracles he performed. From the crowds

that followed him Jesus chose 12 men to be his helpers. In some ways they were like students who travelled with him and learned from him. They walked with him down the dusty roads, they ate with him, they stayed with him and watched everything he did very closely. Jesus knew that he would be on this earth for only a short time and so he invested a lot of time with these 12 men known as his disciples. He wanted them to take over his work when he left.

God's power was at work in Jesus life and through the power of God, he opened the eyes of the blind and he enabled the deaf to hear and the crippled to walk. People who were being tormented by evil spirits were set free. Jesus took a small boy's lunch and blessed it and then distributed it to 5000 people who all ate until they could not eat any more. People flocked by the hundreds and the thousands to see and hear Jesus. But not everyone was happy with Jesus.

The religious leaders were upset because he did not follow all their laws and customs. They were jealous of his popularity, and were threatened by his teaching for he taught with authority even though he had not been to any big school. But what was worse, Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and he claimed to have the authority to forgive sins. To the Jewish leaders this was extremely serious. They believed that Jesus was just an ordinary person and for him to claim to be God's son was in their thinking a very evil thing to say and according to their customs, anyone who said such a thing deserved to die.

Jesus knew what the leaders were thinking and he told his disciples, "I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders, the chief priests and teachers of the law. I will be put to death but three days later I will be raised to life" (Matthew 16:21). The disciples found this hard to believe, but what Jesus said did come true.

Jesus was condemned to death by the religious leaders and then he was taken to Pilate, the Roman Governor, who did not find any reason or crime in Jesus to condemn him to death. In order to keep the leaders happy, he sentenced Jesus to death. Soldiers took Jesus,

flogged him, beat him, made fun of him and mistreated him terribly and then took him out to die. He was nailed to a wooden cross and left to die. He suffered tremendous pain, but in the midst of all the pain he prayed, "Forgive them Father. They don't know what they are doing" (Luke 22:34).

On the cross he died and late in the afternoon he was taken down and buried in a grave that was shaped like a hole in a rock.

Three days later the grave was empty. An angel had rolled back the stone and all could come and see that Jesus was no longer there. He appeared to his disciples and they ate and talked together. It was not a ghost or spirit that appeared, but the real Jesus. They could touch him and could see the marks of the nails in his hands and his feet. He talked with them and encouraged them. For forty days Jesus came and went and then one day Jesus ascended up to heaven. Before he left he said these words, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and teach them everything that I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). After he disappeared from sight two angels appeared and said that Jesus would one day return to this earth again.

Millions of people have heard the story of Jesus. Thousands and thousands have watched the film that shows the story of Jesus. But it is not enough to know about Jesus, you can know Jesus as a real live friend. Jesus wants to transform your life and live with you. He wants to take out of your life all those habits and attitudes that spoil your life. He wants to cleanse your heart and mind from all that is dirty, ugly or selfish. Instead, Jesus wants to fill you with peace and joy and love for God and love for other people as well.

How can you come to know Jesus like this?

1. You must believe that Jesus really is who he said he was, the Son of God, and that he loves you very deeply and wants to help you.
2. You must be willing to admit that your life is not what it should be or could be. All of us have things in our lives that we are ashamed of. There are many times when we have turned our back on the good thing to do and have done the wrong thing. We have been self centred, disobedient, angry, jealous, hateful and have done bad things to others. The Bible calls all these things sin.
3. We cannot get rid of our sins by ourselves, and change our lives through our own efforts. Jesus came to this earth to deal with our sins. When Jesus died that very painful death on the cross he was taking the punishment for our sins. His death was like the death of a lamb that was killed as a sacrifice so that our sins could be forgiven and we could once more be at peace with God.
4. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing." The Bible also says, "The blood of Jesus his Son purifies us from every sin." (1 John 1.7,9)

## Chapter 2

### Jesus Chooses His Disciples

**As Jesus walked along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw two fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew ... Jesus said to them, "Come with me ... " Mark 1:16-17.**

This world was made by God and it was beautiful and everything reflected the love and goodness of God. But sin entered and now God's beautiful world is ruined by greed, envy, bitterness, fighting and jealousy. Jesus came to destroy the devil's work and bring all things back under the rule and control of God. This is called the kingdom of God, and it will last forever. It is universal and will cover every country on the earth, every language and every tribe. But how could Jesus start a kingdom like that?

Jesus came by himself. He had left the power and glory of heaven behind and he came as a mere human. Satan is the prince of this earth and no one totally escapes his influence. Jesus knew that he had just a short time to do his work and see the kingdom of God established. After he died he would return to heaven. Basically he had just three years to introduce and to establish the kingdom of heaven. How would he go about doing it? Jesus had a plan of how he would establish His Kingdom. It did not involve a lot of money or a lot of equipment. His plan was quite simple.

He chose twelve men to be with him. He would lead them and train them and then these men would take his place when he returned to heaven, for they would continue his work. It is true that sometimes there were thousands of people following Jesus, but they were not the most important part of Jesus' plan in building the kingdom. He gave the majority of his time to twelve men. These men had not gone to any big school and they were not famous or well-known. They were just ordinary people from the village, but



Jesus chose these men, his disciples, to stay with him. He was going to teach them, strengthen them and then leave the work in their hands. We will now take a look at how Jesus went about this very important work of choosing and training his disciples.

## **JESUS CALLS HIS DISCIPLES**

For the first thirty years of his life, Jesus lived just like anybody else in a village called Nazareth. He lived with his parents, his brothers and sisters and he went about his work as a village carpenter. When he reached about the age of 30, Jesus realized the time had come for him to begin the work that God had given him to do. The first thing he did was to go to the river Jordan, and there he was baptised by John the Baptist. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming he said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

The next day John made the same speech about Jesus, and two of his disciples, Andrew and John, heard it. They left John the Baptist to follow Jesus. When Jesus saw the two following him, he said, "What are you looking for?" They replied, "Where do you live, Rabbi (teacher)?" Jesus knew that they were wanting to know more about him so he said to them, "Come and see." And so they spent the rest of the day with Jesus. The Bible doesn't say what they talked about that afternoon, but as a result of that day spent with Jesus, Andrew and John believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the man whom God had sent to help his people.

The next day Andrew went and found his brother Simon. Andrew said, "We have found the Messiah" (John 1:41). "Messiah" means the person who has been anointed by God, and the man that God has chosen to redeem his people. Andrew then brought Simon to meet Jesus. When Jesus saw Simon, he gave him a new name and called him Peter, which means "the rock" (John 1:41-42). Andrew and Peter were from a place called Bethsaida. One of their friends who came from the same village was Philip. Jesus called Philip to

come and follow him. Philip went and he found one of his friends, Nathanael, and he brought Nathanael to meet Jesus.

This story shows how Jesus planned to build the kingdom of God. Andrew came to know Jesus and he was convinced that Jesus had been sent by God, and so he persuaded his brother to come and meet Jesus. Philip met Jesus and he went and brought his good friend Nathanael to meet Jesus.

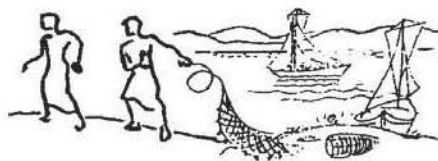
This is Jesus' plan: Jesus chose people, and called them to be his disciples, or followers. Then he spent time with them. He taught them and lived with them, and they developed close friendships. Then his disciples would bring other people and they too would follow Jesus. The number of people who were followers of Jesus increased as people brought relatives, friends and neighbours to meet and follow Jesus.

Can you think of someone who talked to you and spent time with you and helped you to believe in Jesus and to follow him?

Have you spent time with some other men, women or children and helped them to believe in Jesus? If you haven't, then a tremendous joy is waiting for you. When you help someone else to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus, you will find a joy that is greater than any joy you have ever known.

At first the disciples spent only part of their time with Jesus. The rest of their time they went about their day-to-day work of catching fish, or whatever their work was.

One day Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee and he saw Simon and Andrew catching fish. Jesus said, "Come with me and I will teach you to catch people" (Mark 1:17 ). They immediately left their nets and followed Jesus.



Jesus kept on walking and he met James and John. He called the two of them to follow him, and they also left their father and their nets and followed Jesus. Jesus does not call everyone to leave their business to follow him, but everyone who follows Jesus ends up leaving some things behind. All of us have habits, and many of them are not good ones. As we begin to follow Jesus we find that many of those habits disappear. We have new interests and the things that took our time and attention before are no longer as appealing as they were. Many people find that they think differently and speak differently. Jesus has a way of making many changes to our lives.

This teaches us some more about the meaning of becoming a disciple:

1. A disciple is a follower of Jesus.
2. Jesus taught his disciples to “catch people” instead of fish. In other words they were to bring others to follow him also.
3. James and John left their father and their business to follow Jesus? This shows that Jesus was the most important person in their lives.

## **JESUS PUT HIS WORK INTO THE DISCIPLES' HANDS**

Jesus spent three years with the disciples. They walked everywhere with him, they talked with him, and they ate with him. When he was healing the sick, they were watching. When he preached to large crowds of people, they were there listening. He gave work to do such as sending them out to preach, healing the sick and to driving out evil spirits.

Later Jesus was nailed to the cross, but three days after he died, he came alive again and walked out of the tomb where he had been buried. For the next forty days Jesus spent time with his disciples again. He gave them more teaching, encouraged them, strengthened

them, and then at the end of the forty days Jesus was ready to go to heaven. He gathered his disciples together and he said to them, "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Let's look again at this commandment or commission that Jesus gave to them. Jesus didn't just say, "Go and baptise people", and he didn't just say, "Go, preach and baptise." The most important words are "make disciples". This means spending time with people and talking with them until they decide that they want to be disciples or followers of Jesus. Baptism is meant to be the visible sign that someone has decided to follow Jesus and has been accepted by the other people as a follower of Jesus. These new followers then need to continue to be taught and encouraged so that they will be strong and faithful followers of Jesus. The most important work that we Christians have is to help others become committed followers or disciples of Jesus Christ.

## **DISCIPLES MUST BRING OTHERS TO JESUS**

We have seen Jesus' plan. He gave most of his time to teaching and strengthening the twelve men. He wanted them to be strong in their faith and he wanted them to do his work and to carry it on when he had left them. All these disciples would help others to become disciples and then these new disciples worked to help others to become disciples of Jesus also.

Let's look at an example. Imagine a country where there were just twelve Christians, but these twelve Christians were strong Christians. They knew what they believed, they knew the Bible, they were people of prayer and their hearts were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Imagine that if in one year, every one of these twelve men led one other person to repent of their sins, to believe in Jesus and to follow Jesus. At the end of this year, how many disciples would there be? Well, the answer is easy, isn't it?  $12 + 12 = 24$ . There would now be 24 disciples.

Now the next year, if each of these 24 helped one other person to repent, believe in Jesus and become a disciple. How many disciples would there be at the end of the second year? The 24 disciples would gain another 24 disciples, and so there would now be:  $24 + 24 = 48$ .

If we keep on going at this rate things will grow very quickly. Look at these numbers:

Year 3	$48 + 48 = 96$
Year 4	$96 + 96 = 192$
Year 5	$192 + 192 = 384$
Year 6	$384 + 384 = 768$
Year 7	$768 + 768 = 1536$
Year 8	$1536 + 1536 = 3072$
Year 9	$3072 + 3072 = 6144$
Year 10	$6144 + 6144 = 12,288$
Year 11	$12,288 + 12,288 = 24,576$
Year 12	$24,576 + 24,576 = 49,152$
Year 13	$49,152 + 49,152 = 98,304$

This is what would happen if every year each disciple helped just one other person to become a strong committed follower of Jesus. The number of Christians would grow very quickly.

First of all, there were only twelve. But if we keep making disciples, at the end of thirteen years there would be almost one hundred thousand people who were strong in their faith and committed to following Jesus. It is amazing to see what would happen in just thirteen years if each disciple helped only one other person to become a follower of Jesus each year.

This was in Jesus' plan. That's why he called twelve disciples and told them to help others to become his disciples. This is what would happen if each Christian was a real disciple and he or she worked to help others become disciples of Jesus. We must lead others to believe in Jesus. Then we must teach them, and strengthen them until they can also help others to become disciples of Jesus as well.



## **Chapter 3**

### **We Must Tell Others About Jesus**

As Jesus was walking along the road one day, he met a person sitting at a table collecting tax money from all the people. Now the Jewish people did not like tax collectors. Most people do not like paying taxes, but the Jews really hated to pay taxes. This was because the tax collectors were actually working for the Roman government and the money went to pay the Roman soldiers who were governing Judea. The soldiers of Rome were everywhere, and they controlled everything that happened in Judea.

The Jewish people had lost their independence and were now under the authority and control of Rome. And so the Jewish people hated the Romans and especially hated the tax collectors who took their money and gave it to the Romans. The Pharisees and the other leaders of the Jewish people looked down on the tax collectors and called them "sinners." But Jesus saw this man, Matthew, sitting at a table collecting tax money, and he said, "Follow me" (Matthew 9:9). Jesus came for all people on this earth, not just for the so-called "good" people. Matthew was happy that Jesus had called him and he left his business of being a tax collector to follow Jesus.

Many of the tax collectors had lots of money, and it looks as if Matthew also had a lot of money. One of the first things he did was to organize a big party at his house. He called all of his friends to come and meet Jesus. Many tax collectors and other people who did not have a very good name came to this party at Matthew's house. The Pharisees would not go near these people and called them "sinners," but Jesus was happy to sit down and eat with them.

But why did Matthew organize this party? What do you think? I think Matthew wanted his friends to know who Jesus was. My guess is that Matthew wanted to tell all of his friends about the



wonderful change Jesus had made in his life. The Bible does not say, but I can just imagine Matthew standing up and making a speech like this: "Listen, my friends, you know me well. I am a tax collector just like you are. We have worked together, lived together, eaten together and we have gotten drunk together, but now a big change has come into my life. I have stopped my old way of living and now my life is very different. I have a new joy and purpose and meaning in my life and I'm going to travel with Jesus. Jesus has called me to go with him and Jesus is now my best friend. I want all of you to really get to know Jesus."

Telling about Jesus is a very important thing in the life of a disciple. This does not mean that we are all to be preachers, but just as Matthew told his story to his friends, we also need to just talk about Jesus to our friends. Jesus said to his disciples, "The Helper will come - the Spirit ... I will send him to you from the Father and he will speak about me. And you, too, will speak about me ..." (John 15:26-27).

In John 17 Jesus prayed for his disciples. After praying for the disciples, he went on to say, "I pray not only for them, but also for those who believe in me because of their message" (John 17:20). It is Jesus' plan that his disciples must tell others about Jesus, and help them to believe in Him.

## **GO BACK HOME AND SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE**

One day Jesus and his disciples went by boat to the other side of the lake of Galilee. There was a man there who had many evil spirits living in him. The evil spirits had totally ruined and destroyed this man and he had become very wild. He didn't wear any clothes, but went around naked. He never slept in a house, but lived among the graves, which were probably caves in the hillside. At times they tried to chain him up or handcuff him, but he broke the chains. Everyone was afraid of this wild man who was controlled by the evil spirits. When he saw Jesus, he yelled and shouted and came running and fell

down at Jesus' feet. Jesus commanded the evil spirits to leave him. The evil spirits were afraid of Jesus because they knew who he was, and they knew that he had authority over them. They asked Jesus to send them into some pigs. Jesus said, "Go," and at once the spirits left the man and went into the pigs. Then the pigs went wild and raced down the hillside, they ran over the edge of a cliff, fell into the lake and drowned. Now that the evil spirits had gone, this man who had been so wild became normal. He put on some clothes that he had possibly borrowed from the disciples, and he sat down and listened to what Jesus had to say.

But the owners of the pigs were not concerned at all about the wild man who had been set free from the evil spirits and become normal. They were only worried about their pigs and so they told Jesus, "Leave this place, go away from here." As Jesus was getting ready to get into the boat to go, the man who had been controlled by the evil spirits begged Jesus, "Let me go with you." But Jesus said, "Go back home and tell what God has done for you" (Luke 8:39). So this man went back to his village. He went from town to town, all through the area, telling everybody how Jesus had delivered him from the demons. This man had never been to any big school, and he had not been to Bible College, but he knew what his life was like before and he knew the big change that Jesus had made. He told everybody of how Jesus had changed his life.

## **TELLING YOUR STORY GIVING YOUR TESTIMONY**

Many times in church there is an opportunity for people to tell about the change that Jesus has made in their life. Some call this "giving their testimonies". Someone will stand up and speak about the change that God has made in his or her life. This is good, and is often an encouragement to other people in the church. But this custom of giving our testimonies should not be restricted to what we say in church. Often the people who need to hear about the change

that Jesus has made are not the ones in church. We need to talk about the wonderful change that Jesus has made to those who are not Christians. We must talk to our friends and our relatives of all the good things that God has done in our lives. Psalm 66:16 says: "Come and listen to me ... and I will tell you what he has done for me."

The disciple must know how to talk to others about Jesus. If we who are Christians do not tell about Jesus, who will?

Some people are a little bit frightened of giving their testimonies or talking to others about Jesus. They say, "What will I say? I don't know what to say."

Now we are going to look at some guidelines that will help you to talk to others about Jesus:

1. **A testimony is your story.** When you give your testimony you talk about what has happened in your life. A testimony is not the same as preaching. A testimony is when you talk about what Jesus has done in your own life. When there is a court case, the judge will ask for witnesses. A witness has to talk about what he has seen or heard or what happened to him. The judge is not interested in this man talking about what happened to somebody else or what somebody else said. The judge wants to hear what happened to you; what you, yourself have seen. A testimony is the same. We must talk about what changes have come into our own lives. When Peter and John stood before the council, they said, "We cannot stop speaking of what we ourselves have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20). They did not just stand up and talk on and on. They did not talk about what they thought or what somebody else had told them. They told about the things that happened in their own lives.
2. **Testimonies should be short.** People are not interested in listening to you tell a long story. You can not talk about

everything that has happened since the time you were a baby and up to the present. You need to think about these four things:

- What sort of person was I before I came to know Jesus in a personal way?
- How did I come to believe in Jesus?
- What changes have come about in my life?
- How is my life different than it was before?

A testimony should emphasize these four points. It should also not be made into a long story.

3. **A testimony must talk about Jesus.** A testimony is a story of what Jesus has done in your life, and so when you share your testimony, Jesus must be exalted. One person stood up to give his testimony and he spent most of his time talking about all the terrible and immoral things that he used to do. But this type of testimony did not help the church service and it did not bless the people who were listening. He spent more time talking about sin and evil and very little time talking about Jesus. It was not a good testimony; a testimony must bring glory and praise and honour to Jesus. Romans 5:8-9 says, "It was while we were still sinners, that Christ died for us! By his blood (death) we are now put right with God."

We do not become Christians through our own strength. It is Jesus who makes us new by changing us from the inside. Jesus is the one who forgives our sins and changes our lives. And so in our testimony, the name of Jesus must be emphasized and Jesus must be glorified.

4. **Bible verses can strengthen our testimonies.** When you are giving your testimony or talking to someone else about the change that Jesus has made in your life, it is good to quote some

Bible verses. The Bible says that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. If we use the sword of the Spirit, this can really speak to someone else's heart and cause them to think deeply. This will make them want to know Jesus as their Saviour also.

5. **Testimonies must be up-to-date.** One man stood up in church to give his testimony. He told how Jesus had saved him and changed his life. What he said was good, but his testimony was ten years old. He told how Jesus had saved him ten years before but he did not tell about what Jesus was doing in his life this week or this month. Later the pastor said, "This man is a good Christian but every week he says the same thing. Every week he tells about what happened ten years ago when he was saved, but he never says anything about what God is doing now. If God changed your life in a big way some years ago that is good. You can talk about that, but you must also talk about what God is doing in your life today. How is he helping your family? Does he help you when you are sick? Does he help you with your problems? Does he help you with your work or with your job? People want to know what God is doing now. Talk about the special joys God has brought into your life. People do not want to follow a God who used to work but now does nothing. They want to know about a God who is working in your life today.

### **SOME TESTIMONIES**

One woman stood up in church and said, "Before I used to think that I was a Christian. I went to church. Sometimes I prayed, especially if I had some big problems or was sick. Most of the time I did not think too much about God. I did not do any really bad or wicked things. I thought I was okay; after all I had been baptised. Then one day one of my sisters read this Bible verse to me. The verse is Isaiah 64:6 says, "All of us have been sinful; even our best

actions are filthy through and through. Because of our sins we are like leaves that wither and are blown away by the wind."

"When I heard this verse I was surprised, because it said that all the good things that I had done were just like dirty smelly rags. All the good things that I had done did not make me good in God's eyes at all. Then my sister went on and talked to me about why Jesus died on the cross. I knew that Jesus had died on the cross, but I didn't think that he died on the cross because of my sins. She said that Jesus really wanted to come into my life and to change my life and make me new. What my sister said really spoke to me and made me think about lots of things. I thought about my sins and I became ashamed of all the sins that I had done. I thought about the times when I had been jealous and angry and said nasty things to other people. I asked Jesus to come into my life and to take away my sins to change me. I asked Him to take away all the evil and nasty things in my life and to make me completely new. When I did this, a tremendous joy came into my life.

"Before I thought I was a Christian. I said I was a Christian but I did not live like a Christian. But now that Jesus has come into my life, he enables me to live like a Christian; he has completely changed me. Jesus is the Lord of my life and I love him very much."

One young man gave this testimony: "Before I was a very evil man, and I did lots of wicked things. I won't talk about the things I have done because I am so ashamed of them, and of the way I lived. One of my brothers spoke to me about how Jesus has changed his life. This made me think a lot, because I knew that I was following the wrong road. But I was wondering, how can I get free from the way I am living? One time I became very sick and I was very frightened. I decided to ask some Christians to come and pray for me. When they came and prayed for me I confessed my sins. I said that I was sorry about all the evil that I had done. The pastor who came to pray with me read two Bible verses to me and I always think about these Bible verses. The first one is 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins to God, He will keep his promise and do what is right, He



will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing." And then he gave another Bible verse, 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin." I am so happy that Jesus has cleansed my heart through his blood and now I have so much joy and peace. Jesus has changed my life and has made me completely new. 2 Corinthians 5:17 is the story of my life. 'Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come.' "

An older man said this in church one day. He said, "It's some years since I became a Christian, and I am so happy that Jesus has changed my life. The joy that he has given me is better than any of the other joys that I had found before. Jesus is my very best friend. He is always with me and never forgets me. This year I had to find school fees for my youngest son, and I did not know where I would get the money. But I prayed to God and asked him to help me. God has answered my prayers and helped me with my problem. Jesus helps me with big problems and little problems. I am so glad that he is my best friend."

Did you enjoy these testimonies? Think about them. Did they follow the five rules for good testimonies?

- A testimony is your story.
- Testimonies should not be too long.
- Testimonies should bring praise and glory to Jesus.
- Bible verses help to strengthen testimonies.
- Testimonies must be up-to-date.

## **WRITING YOUR TESTIMONY**

It is very important that Christians should share their testimonies with others. We need to share them with people at church, at home, at school, or at work. These three questions on the next page will help you to write your testimony.



What was my life like before I met Christ?

How did I give my life to Christ?

How has Christ changed my life?

## Chapter 4

### We Must Study Our Bible

**Jesus said, "If you obey my teaching, you are really my disciples; you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32**

Freedom comes from knowing the truth. The truth is found in the teachings of Jesus, which are found in the Bible, which is the Word of God.

In many countries there are lots of Bibles. In almost every big town you can find a Christian book store. Many missionaries have spent years of their lives translating the Bible into various languages. We also have Bible Societies, which have helped to produce hundreds of thousands of Bibles. Other Christians give them money so that the Bibles can be printed at a price that people can afford to buy. All of these people are doing this work because they know that the Word of God is very, very important in helping and strengthening all Christians.

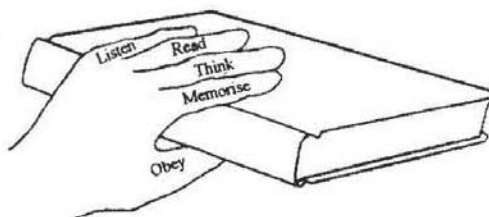
Satan too knows that the Bible is extremely important to strengthen Christians. When the Communists took over the government in Russia, one of the first things they did was to destroy Bibles. They made it absolutely forbidden for people to read the Bible. If a Bible was found in someone's house, the police would not only take the Bible and burn it, but they would also put that man or woman in prison. The Russian Christians knew that the Bible was extremely important to them, and so they hid their Bibles, even though they knew that if they were caught they would be sent to prison. They had to hide to worship God. Often there were not enough Bibles for every Christian, so when they met they would memorise Bible verses. In that way, even if their Bibles were stolen, the Bible verses that were memorised could never be stolen. One

Christian would teach another Christian Bible verses, and the knowledge that one person had was passed on to someone else. Some people would hide, and in the middle of the night they would use a typewriter and type up Bible verses onto pieces of paper. They could give the verses to their friends so that their friends could read them also.

Brother Andrew is a man whom God called to take the Bible into Communist countries. He knew that this was dangerous work. He knew that if the police or soldiers caught him, they could put him in prison or could even kill him. But he was ready to go to prison and he was ready to die. He knew God had called him to take Bibles into Communist countries, so he prayed much and he asked others to pray for him that God would help him to be able to avoid being caught by the police. God answered prayer and helped him safely carry thousands of Bibles to the Christians in Communist countries. God did many miracles and helped them to avoid being caught. This work of Brother Andrew strengthened thousands of Christians who otherwise may have given up, or who would not have been able to grow in their Christians lives. He did this work for many, many years, because he knew that the Bible was very, very important. Those who want to be disciples of Jesus must know God's word.

## **WE MUST STUDY OUR BIBLE**

Look at this picture. In this picture you see a hand holding a Bible. A little word is written on each finger. This shows us what we need to do if we really want to hold on to God's word.



**Listen.** - Listening to God's word is very important in strengthening our Christian lives. Many listen to God's word when they go to church. The pastor has a very important job teaching the people so that they can know and understand God's word. Some people are not able to read the Bible for themselves and so they rely upon the pastor to do a good job of teaching them God's word. Some people have a very important task in the church as Sunday school teachers, Bible study leaders or teaching children and young people about God's word. In some countries Christians go into schools each week to teach Bible classes. To listen to God's word is very good, but sometimes it's easy to forget what we have just heard. If we do not hear and remember, we will not be able to grow strong in our Christian lives. God's word is the light to show us the way to walk. It is also food to give us strength in our lives. Read Psalms 119:105.

**Read.** Reading God's word is even better, especially if we read it every day. We can read it in the morning, and we can read it in the evening. There are so many things to read in the Bible. We can read the Old Testament stories, and also the parables and the stories that Jesus told. We can read about what Jesus did and we can read all about the things that happened in the days of the apostles. We can read the words that Paul wrote to strengthen and to help the churches, and we can also read the songs and prayers found in the book of Psalms.

**Think or Meditate.** It is important to hear God's word and to read it too, but we have to do more than that. We must think about God's word. Paul went and preached in a place called Berea. These people not only heard what Paul said, but every day they read and they thought about what Paul said. "They listened to the message with great eagerness, and every day they studied the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was really true." Acts 17:11. They did not just hear it, they didn't just read it, they thought and prayed about it and this strengthened their lives.

One pastor said, "Have you ever seen how cows eat? First they eat and swallow the grass. Then after their stomachs are full, they go and lie down on the ground. Then they bring up the grass that they have swallowed and they sit there and chew on it for a long time and swallow it again. That is what we Christians should be like. We read God's word, but then we need to meditate or think about what we have read, just like a cow chews its food a second time. King David said, "How I love your law, I think about it all day long"(Psalm 119:97).

**Learn or Memorise.** After Jesus' baptism, he went out into the desert. He was there for forty days and he had nothing to eat. He was thinking about the work that God had given him to do. At the end of the forty days when he was very weak and tired, Satan came and tempted him. When Satan tempted him, Jesus replied with words from the Bible. The story is found in Matthew 4:7-10. Jesus did not carry a Bible with him. There wasn't a small pocket Bible in Jesus' day, so the verses that Jesus spoke to Satan were already in his mind and heart. This shows that Jesus had given time to memorise Bible verses and that they were there in his mind and heart. If Jesus spent time memorising Bible verses, it shows how important it is. If it was important for Jesus, it's even more important for us. Psalm 119:11 says, "I keep your law in my heart so that I will not sin against you."

Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path." Many people find that reading the Bible on a daily basis and memorising Bible verses have been a wonderful help to them. It has been like having a real good flashlight on a dark night and it has stopped them from falling over and getting hurt or into trouble.

One young girl went to Sunday school every week. Her teacher taught her many Bible verses. Every week she learned new Bible verses until there were many Bible verses that she had memorised. Some time later, she was very sick and in hospital. There were many things to make her worry and be afraid. When she was worried and afraid, she thought again of the Bible verses that she had learned in

Sunday school and these Bible verses gave her peace and strength. Psalm 119:92 says, "If your law had not been my source of joy, I would have died from my sufferings."

**Obey.** We can listen to God's word, read God's word, memorise God's word and think about God's word, but none of these things would help us if we did not obey God's word. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey my commandments" (John 14:15). He also said, "Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me" (John 14:21).

In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus tells a story about two men who were building houses. One wanted to get the job done in a hurry and so he saw some flat land near the river. The soil was soft and it was not hard to dig the soil to put in the foundations. The other man wanted his house to last for a long time and so he went up on the hill where the ground was hard and there were big rocks. It took a lot longer to build his house. But then there came a storm, and both houses were hit by the wind and the rain. The man whose house was up on the rocky hill stayed firm, but the man who built down by the river lost everything. Jesus said the person who listens to what he said and puts it into practice is like the man who built on the solid ground. When the difficult times come he stays firm. The person who hears the good news about Jesus and does not put it into practice, is like the man who built by the river bank. At first everything was wonderful, but then the tough times came and he had no foundations and was just swept away. Followers of Jesus need to have their faith anchored on the solid rock of God's Word.

## **DISCIPLES MUST TEACH OTHER DISCIPLES ABOUT GOD'S WORD**

Here are some questions to answer and these will give you practice in finding answers in the Bible. Look up the verses and write in the answers.

Read Matthew 28:28. Jesus told his disciples to go and make more disciples. Then what did he tell them to do?

On the day of Pentecost, 3000 new people repented and believed in Christ. Read Acts 2:42. What did the new believers do?

Read Acts 6:4. The apostles said that there were two important things for them to do. What were they?

Read Acts 20:20. What did Paul do when he visited peoples' homes?

Read 2 Timothy 2:2. Paul said to Timothy, "Take the teachings that you heard me proclaim in the presence of many witnesses, and entrust them to reliable people, who will be able to teach others also." Disciples must learn the word of God and they must teach others so that they can become strong disciples, and those in turn must teach others.



## **WHICH PEOPLE SHOW US A GOOD EXAMPLE OF BEING A FOLLOWER OF JESUS?**

1. Nancy bought a Bible. She always takes it to church, but she seldom reads it when she is at home.
2. Nalu is a girl who never had an opportunity to go to school, and she did not know how to read or write. When she became a Christian, she had a strong desire to be able to read the Bible, and so she began to pray each day. She asked God to help her to read. God answered her prayer and helped her, God also got some of Nalu's friends and relatives to help her. Now Nalu is able to read her Bible everyday.
3. Marcus is a young man whose mother is a Christian, but his mother cannot read. Marcus bought a Bible verse book and each day he taught his mother to memorise Bible verses.
4. Petrus is a pastor and every week he spends a lot of time in study and preparation preparing a good Bible message to preach to his congregation on Sunday.
5. Monica is a Sunday school teacher. Every week she helps her Sunday school children learn Bible verses. At Christmas time she gives a prize to all the children who have worked hard at memorising Bible verses.
6. Casper has been praying for his friend Thomas. He witnessed to him and told him how to become a Christian. Now Thomas has also become a Christian. What do you think Casper needs to do in order to help Thomas become a very strong Christian?

## Chapter 5

### We Must Be People Of Prayer

Jesus called the twelve disciples to follow him. For the next three years, they went everywhere with him. They watched what he did and listened carefully to all that he said.

One Sabbath Jesus had preached to the people in the synagogue (Jewish church) in Capernaum. While he was there he commanded an evil spirit to leave a person. Then he went to Peter's house, only to find that Peter's mother-in-law was sick, so he healed her. Later in the evening after the sun was set, many people gathered outside Peter's house and "Jesus healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases and drove out many demons ..." (Mark 1:34). It was a very busy and tiring day, and it was late before Jesus got any chance to rest.

Early the next morning, Peter got up and discovered that Jesus was not in the house. Peter went outside to look for Jesus but could not find him. Some went to find Jesus down by the shore of the lake of Galilee, but he was not there. Already more and more sick people were beginning to gather around the door of Peter's house. They were all asking for Jesus, but Jesus had disappeared! Where was he?

Eventually they found him. He had been praying. The Bible says, "Very early ... long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of the town to a lonely place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). Many of us would have said, "Yesterday was very busy, so now I need to take it easy and lie in bed." But Jesus knew that the only power that he had was the power he received from his Father. That power could only be kept new and fresh if he spent lots of time in prayer with his Father. Prayer was a very, very important part of Jesus' life. It must also be very important in our lives.

## JESUS - A MAN OF PRAYER

Jesus had been very busy healing the sick and speaking to thousands of people. It had been a long tiring day and the people were hungry. They were a long way from any shops or markets, and so out of compassion Jesus miraculously fed 5000 people with just five little scones and two little fish. The people were delighted. They thought it would be wonderful if Jesus did that every day. Some thought that if Jesus would give them food every day, then they should make him king. But Jesus knew what they were thinking, and did not agree with their wrong ideas, and so he sent the people away. When they had left, he went up on a mountain to pray. He was there alone on the mountain praying to his Father, and he stayed there in prayer until some time after three o'clock in the morning.

God's power was very evident in Jesus life and the reason for this was that Jesus spent lots of time in prayer. God was the source of power and because Jesus was in constant contact with God through prayer the power of God could flow through his life.

Read Luke 5:15-16. Crowds of people were coming to see and hear Jesus. They wanted to hear what he had to say and they wanted to see the miracles that he did. But what did Jesus do? Jesus would leave the crowds and go away to lonely places where he would pray. If Jesus who was the Son of God needed to spend lots of time in prayer, then how much more important it is for us.

Sometimes Jesus spent an entire night in prayer. In Luke 6:12-13, we read about Jesus choosing 12 men to be his close companions and special followers. Before he chose these 12 men he spent a whole night in prayer looking for God's guidance and direction. When we face big decisions in our lives, we also need to spend much time in prayer and God will show us the right thing to do.

These stories show us that Jesus did nothing in his own strength. When he preached, he was not just telling stories that he had made up. Instead he said, "I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has commanded me what I must say and speak"

(John 12:49). How did Jesus know what God wanted him to say and do? Jesus knew what the Father wanted him to do because he spent lots of time in prayer talking to, and listening to God. We should do the same.

## **TEACH US TO PRAY**

One day after Jesus had been praying, one of his disciples came to him and said, "Lord teach us to pray ..." (Luke 11:1).

The disciples had seen that prayer was very important to Jesus. They saw that the secret of Jesus' miracle-working power was that he spent much time in prayer. Now they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. We are also Jesus' disciples, and we also need to ask Jesus to teach us how to pray.

Prayer is very important. Little children can learn to pray. Brand new Christians need to learn how to pray. But those who have been strong Christians for many years will say that they want to learn even more about prayer.

Jesus spent much time talking to his disciples about prayer. Let us look now at some of the things Jesus taught them.

### **God likes to answer prayer**

You know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:11)

### **We can pray in secret**

When you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)

### **Joining with other Christians strengthens our praying**

Whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

(Matthew 18:19)

## **We must believe that God will answer our prayers**

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.  
(Matthew 21:22)

## **You must pray in Jesus' name**

I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son. If you ask for anything in my name, I will do it.  
(John 14:13-14)

## **We must be one in mind and heart with Jesus**

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it. (John 15:7)

## **THE APOSTLES WERE PEOPLE OF PRAYER**

The disciples saw that prayer was very important in the life of Jesus. They learned all that Jesus told them about prayer and so, when Jesus returned to heaven, prayer became very important in their lives also. After Jesus returned to heaven the 12 disciples were called apostles. An apostle is a person who is sent to do an important work.

Jesus had told them that they were all to wait in Jerusalem and that he would send the Holy Spirit to them, to be their helper and to give them strength. Acts 1:14 says that they gathered frequently to pray as a group as they waited for the promised Holy Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost 3000 people became believers in Jesus and were baptised. Acts 2:42 says that there were four very important things that these new believers did.

- They spent time learning from the apostles.
- They took part in the fellowship.
- They shared in the fellowship meals.
- They prayed together.

These things helped the new believers to become strong in their faith. The same principles apply today. People who are new followers of Jesus need lots of encouragement by spending time with

mature Christians, having fellowship with other Christians and spending time in prayer.

Later, persecution came to the apostles and they were told that they were no longer allowed to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. What did they do?

Acts 4:24-30 says that they all met together and prayed. They praised God for his greatness and his power. They told God about the threats that had been made and the difficulties they were facing. Then they asked for boldness so that they would keep on speaking and talking about Jesus, and they prayed that God would do even more miracles of healing through their lives so that people would come to know Jesus.

When difficult times come in our Christian lives, and difficult times certainly will come, we must not give up or run away. We must meet with other believers and pray and God will give even more strength to help us overcome the difficult times.

Prayer was very important in the lives of the first Christians. The apostles, another name for the 12 disciples, who were the early leaders of the church spent much time in prayer. They said that the two most important things in their lives were to, "Give our full time to prayer and the work of preaching" (Acts 6:4).

All of these stories show that prayer was very important for the early Christians and it should be very important in our lives also. Unfortunately, many Christians are like the boy in this next story.

## **THE BOY WHO WOULD NOT TALK**

Once there was a man who was very delighted when his wife gave birth to a baby boy. He was very proud of his baby boy and carried him around the town where he lived and showed him to everyone. Everyone smiled and said, "He is a beautiful little boy and he looks just like you." This made the father very proud and happy.

The little boy had his first birthday and the father was a little worried because his little boy had not said anything. He had not even



said "Papa" or "Mama." The father would hold the baby and cuddle the baby and tell stories to the baby, but the baby never spoke.

Two more years went by and still the baby did not talk. He would cry and he would eat but he would not talk. The father was very worried and very sad.

Then one Sunday morning the boy said a few words. The father was so happy and so proud. Now he knew that there was nothing wrong with the child's mouth. But a whole week passed and the child did not say anything until the next Sunday, when he said the same words as the week before. The father was very surprised. "What sort of child do I have that only speaks on Sundays?" he thought. "Why is it that all he will say is, "Daddy help me" or "Daddy hold me" or "Daddy give me"? Years went by and nothing changed. The father was very puzzled and very sad.

If you had a little child like that, how would you feel? We would all be worried for there is something terribly wrong when a child does not speak.

This story is like a parable. Too many Christians are like children that have not learned to speak. They like to be fed and cuddled and receive all of God's blessings, but they do not spend time talking with God. God wants to be our closest friend, but that means we need to spend time talking with God and listening to him.

Think about your life. How often do you talk to your heavenly Father?

Do you thank God? Praise Him for His love to us. Thank Him for sending Jesus. Do you talk to him every day, or just on Sundays?

When you talk to your Heavenly Father, what do you talk about? Do you talk about family problems, and family needs? Do you talk about finances and money? What about work or the garden, and school for the children? God is interested in all of these things. If you are a student, do you talk to God in prayer about your studies, and exams and what to do when you leave High School or College? We also need to spend time thanking God for all the ways he helps us. Thank him for his greatness, love, protection and help. Thank



him for answering prayers. God is your heavenly Father and he is interested in every part of your life. We should not just pray about our own needs but also the needs of others, especially those who are not yet followers of Jesus.

## **MAKE A PRAYER LIST**

In one church the pastor made this announcement: "In two months' time we are going to have a week of special meetings. We have asked an evangelist to come and preach each night for a whole week. We want God to bless this week and we want many people to come to know Jesus in a special personal way. I have some prayer cards with a space on them where you can write down ten names. I want you to think of ten friends or relatives and write their names down on this card. Then I want you to pray for them every day from now until the time of the special services. There is a little calendar on the card and you can tick off every day as you pray for your ten friends."

Betty was one of those who took a prayer card from the pastor. (You can see a picture of the prayer card on page 67 at the back of this book.) She went home and thought about her friends who were not Christians. She prayed and asked God to show her which names she should write down and then she filled up her card.

Every morning when she woke up she would look at the names on her card and pray for each person. She prayed that God would speak to them and make them really hungry to know God. She also asked God to speak to them so that they would feel bad about their sins.

Every day Betty prayed for her friends until the two months were up. Before the special week of meetings started, Betty went to each person on her prayer list and invited them to come to the special services.

On the first night of the services, Betty was thrilled to see some of her friends at church. Betty brought them into the church and sat

beside them. When the evangelist preached, Betty was silently praying for her friends.

The next night they came back again and the evangelist preached an excellent message. When he had finished preaching he said, "If you would like to give your life to Jesus and turn from your sins, then I would like you to come to the front and I will pray with you." Betty looked at her friends, and they looked like they wanted to go, but they also looked a little frightened. Betty whispered to them, "Don't be afraid. If you want to go, I will go with you."

That night three of Betty's friends asked Jesus to come into their hearts and to take away their sins, and Betty was so happy. God had answered her prayers.

Followers of Jesus must be people of prayer, just like Jesus was. Betty discovered that her prayers could make a big difference in the lives of her friends.

### **Think about your life.**

- Do you have some friends or relatives who are not Christians?
- What could you do to help them become Christians?
- Could you make a prayer list like Betty did?

You could use the prayer card inside the back cover of this book and pray every day for your ten friends. You will be thrilled at the difference it will make.

## **Chapter 6**

### **We Must Be Filled With The Holy Spirit**

Before Jesus died he talked to the disciples about the Holy Spirit. He said that he would be going away and leaving them, but that in his place he would send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would be their helper and friend just as he had been. You can read what Jesus told them in John 14 - 16.

After Jesus had died and then risen from the grave, he stayed with the disciples for 40 days. He gave them more teaching and instruction and then it was time to leave them and return to heaven. He called all of them together to give them his last instructions and his blessing. Jesus and his disciples gathered on the Mount of Olives just outside of Jerusalem and he spoke to them.

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised. John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.  
(Acts 1:4-5)

Jesus had done all of his work through the power of the Holy Spirit. He knew that the disciples needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

#### **JESUS WAS FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit was very important in Jesus life. In Luke 3:21-22 we read that when Jesus was baptised, the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove. The dove is a symbol of peace and gentleness. After his baptism the Holy Spirit led Jesus away from the towns and the villages and into the desert where he stayed for 40 days in prayer

and fasting in preparation for his life ministry. Some people think that if we are filled with the Holy Spirit that we will be free from temptation. But that is not true. Jesus was tempted by Satan himself, but through the power of the Holy Spirit and by using the Bible, Jesus was able to overcome the devil and defeat him. At the end of the 40 days and at the end of the temptations Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus went into the synagogue at Nazareth and read some verses from the book of Isaiah. The verses were, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people" (Luke 4: 18-19).

All of these events in the life of Jesus show us that Jesus started his work in the power of the Holy Spirit. He defeated Satan through the power of the Holy Spirit, and he did all of his work through the anointing power of the Holy Spirit.

If Jesus relied upon the power of the Holy Spirit working through his life, then we also must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We cannot be the people God wants us to be in our own strength. We can only be the type of people that God wants us to be and do God's work through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **JESUS PROMISED TO SEND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The disciples lived with Jesus for three years. They watched and saw how Jesus lived. They saw the miracles he performed and listened as he taught the people. Jesus sent them out and they healed the sick and cast out evil spirits in His name. They preached the good news of Jesus to everyone they met.

Although the disciples had done all of these things, Jesus knew that their belief was not very strong. He knew that shortly he would be killed, and also that he would rise from the grave and go back to heaven. He would no longer be with the disciples like he had been

before. The disciples were worried about what would happen when Jesus left them, but Jesus said to them, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God" (John 14:16-17).

Jesus taught the disciples some important truths about the Holy Spirit:

1. "The Father ... will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever" (John 14:16). The meaning is that the Holy Spirit is not something strange, but would help them just like Jesus had done. The Holy Spirit would not leave them to go back to heaven, but would remain with them all the time.
2. He will be our teacher and reveal to us the truth about God and how we should live to please God (John 15:26).
3. In John 16:7 Jesus said that it was better for the disciples that he go away as this would make it possible for the Holy Spirit to come. Jesus had a physical body and could only be in one place at any one time. But the Holy Spirit does not have a physical body and so can be with all Christians at all times regardless of where they may be.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples, and he kept his promise. When Jesus met with the disciples on the Mount of Olives, he told them to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came. They did what Jesus told them and went back to Jerusalem. They waited for ten days, and then one special Sunday morning, the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came. He came with the sound of a rushing mighty wind, and they saw what looked like fire. The Holy Spirit filled their lives and they were changed.

Before, they had been frightened of the Jewish leaders, but now they had lost their fear. They used to hide in the house and keep the door locked, but now they left the house and went out into the city and witnessed about Jesus. People stopped what they were doing and really listened because the disciples spoke with boldness and with power. God did a miracle and enabled them to speak to people in languages that they had never learned before.

As the people listened they were convicted of their sins and asked, "What shall we do?" Peter replied, "Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). That day 3000 people believed the message of the disciples and were baptised to show their faith in Jesus.

In this class we have seen the following main points:

- Jesus started his work in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- He promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to the disciples.
- The Holy Spirit filled the disciples on the day of Pentecost and gave them boldness and strength to live and suffer for Jesus.

What about you? Are you trying to live the Christian life in your own strength, or are you allowing the Holy Spirit to fill you and use you?

## **THE WATER OF LIFE**

One day Jesus was in the temple at Jerusalem. This was a special time when the people remembered how God had told Moses to hit a large rock with his stick, and water had flowed out of the rock. The people of Israel had been very thirsty, but God had performed a miracle and provided fresh water out of a dry rock.

On this day Jesus stood up in the Temple area and said, "Whoever is thirsty should come to me, and drink ... whoever



believes in me should drink ... streams of life-giving water will pour out from his side.” Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit, which those who believed in him were going to receive (John 7:37-39).

Water was very important for the Jewish people, because they did not get lots of rain. If rain did not come at the right time of the year, then their gardens would not grow and they would have so little food that they might starve.

When people are very thirsty, all they can think about is finding some water to drink. They know that without water they will die and so they give all their attention to finding water to drink.

Today many Christians are not filled with the Holy Spirit because they are not really spiritually thirsty. They want to go to heaven, but they are not really committed to Jesus Christ. Jesus does not have the most important place in their lives. This shows that they are not really thirsty.

## **STRANDED IN THE DESERT**

Once there was a rich man flying over the desert in his little plane. Everything was very dry below him. There were no trees or grass or rivers or houses or people, there was just a dry open desert. He was not worried, because he was up in the sky having a good time in his little plane, but then something went wrong with his plane. The engine coughed, spluttered and then it stopped. He tried to start the engine but it would not start and the plane began to go down. He was a good pilot, he controlled the plane and was able to get it to land on some fairly flat ground, but a large rock smashed one of the wheels. He was not badly injured, but there was no way he could make the plane fly again.

What was he to do? The sun was very hot and there was no place to hide from the sun. He thought that if he stayed there he would die of thirst. But if he went walking he might find some water. He decided to go and look for water.



The more he walked the hotter he got. His throat became as dry as paper. He quickly ran out of strength and energy and eventually he fell down in the shade of a large rock and thought he would die. He thought of all the money in his wallet, but it was no help to him. He thought of his big house with litres and litres of water, but it was of no use to him. None of the things he owned would give him life. He needed water. He was dying simply because he did not have any water.

This man thought only about water, for nothing was more important to him than water. He would give everything he owned just to get a drink of water. He was ready to do anything if only he could get a drink of water. We need to be that way in our Christian lives.

The Holy Spirit is the water of life. Jesus wants to fill us with the water of life. But first he asks us, "Are you really thirsty? Are you ready to give up all the pleasures of sin in order to receive the water of life? Are you willing to give up your own ideas and dreams and ambitions and let the Holy Spirit control you?" It is only those who are really thirsty who can truly be filled with God's Holy Spirit.

## **JESUS MUST HAVE FIRST PLACE**

Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me cannot be my disciple unless he loves me more than he loves his father and his mother, his wife and his children, brothers and his sisters and himself as well. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ... None of you can be my disciple unless he gives up everything you have" (Luke 14:26-27, 33).

These are very strong words. Jesus says that he must come first. He must be more important than father and mother, or wife and children or brothers and sisters.

Jesus must be more important than our own lives. We must be ready to take up our cross and follow Jesus. This means that we must be ready to die for Jesus.

We must be ready to give up everything we have or own and put Jesus in the most important place. This is what it means to be a true disciple or follower of Jesus.

It is easy to say that Jesus is the most important person in our lives, but it is a different thing to really live like that. Jesus must be the King of our lives. That means he must be in control and we must be obedient to him and do what he says. Acts 5:32 says that the Holy Spirit is God's gift which he gives to those who obey him.

How important is Jesus in your life? Is he in control, or are you still holding on to control? Are you really obedient to God or do you follow your own ideas and desires rather than God's?

## **GOD WANTS TO FILL YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit is God's special gift that he gives to all Christians. Some think that God gives the Holy Spirit to church leaders only or to just a few special Christians, but this is not right. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said,

Each one of you must turn from his sins and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit. For God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away - all whom the Lord our God calls to himself. (Acts 2:38-39)

The Holy Spirit is God's special gift to help us be strong faithful followers of Jesus. In order to receive this gift we need to be spiritually thirsty and totally committed to following Jesus. We must also do the following:

1. **Turn from our sin.** The verse above says that we must turn from our sin before we can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. **Obey.** Acts 5:32 says that the Holy Spirit is God's gift to those who obey him. This means obeying God in every area of our lives. God is to be Lord and Master of our lives, and we are to live in obedience to him.
3. **Pray.** In Luke 11:13 Jesus says that our Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.
4. **Believe.** As well as asking we must believe. In Matthew 21:22 Jesus says, "If you believe you will receive what ever you ask for in prayer."

In this class we have looked at these main points:

- Jesus did all of his work through the strength of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples.
- The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.
- We also are disciples of Jesus, and we also must be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- To be filled with the Holy Spirit we must:
  - Turn away from our sins and be spiritually thirsty
  - Put Jesus first in our lives and allow him to control every part of our lives. We must be obedient to him.
  - Ask God to fill every part of our lives with the Holy Spirit.
  - Believe that God wants to fill us, and he will fill us.

## Chapter 7

### We Must Live A Life Of Love

**Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples. John 13:34-35.**

#### JESUS SHOWS HIS LOVE

Jesus was walking down the road one day with a large crowd of people following him. Suddenly a person started calling out and began walking towards Jesus. Quickly the people in the crowd moved away and gave space to this man. It was not because he was an important person that they gave space to him but because he was a leper and everyone was afraid of him. In the time of Jesus, people were dreadfully afraid of leprosy and so people with leprosy were not allowed near other people. They had to leave their families and live outside the towns. There was no medicine to cure the illness, so once they got leprosy they had it until they died. Life for a leper was very sad and hopeless. Whenever they saw someone coming near them they had to call out, "Unclean, unclean!"

This man came and knelt before Jesus and said, "Sir, if you want to, you can make me clean" (Matthew 8:2). Most likely the man had some terrible ulcers, he did not smell very nice, and his bandages were dirty. The crowd moved back, away from the man and watched, wondering what Jesus would do. He did not say, "Go wash in the river and you will be clean," instead Jesus said, "I do want to help you. Be clean." There was a gasp from the people watching, for Jesus did something unthinkable. He reached out and touched the man and instantly the leprosy was healed.

Let us think about the man with leprosy. It had been many years since anyone had touched him. Most people stayed as far away as

possible, but Jesus was not afraid of him. Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. Jesus did not just talk about love, he showed his love. Jesus' life was a life of love. He wants us to show his love to others. When God fills us with the Holy Spirit, he fills us with his love. " God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us" (Romans 5:5).

## **CHRISTIANS MUST HELP THOSE IN NEED**

The Bible says, "This is how we know what love is, Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for others ... our love should not just be words and talk; it must be true love which shows itself in action (1 John 3:16,18).

In Acts 4:34-35, we read that the Christians were so full of love for others that they sold their property and gave the money to the apostles. The apostles in turn gave the money to other believers who were in need, such as widows. In Acts 9:36-41, we read about a woman named Dorcas, who spend her time doing good and helping the poor. She also gave special attention to the widows and helped make clothes for those who did not have enough money. The Bible also says that real genuine Christianity is "to care for orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world" (James 1:27). When Christians demonstrate real love and concern for people who are in need and who are hurting, and go out of their way to help them, then other people are attracted to follow Jesus.

## **FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE**

Today we have hospitals and health centres, and lots of people work to look after the sick, however 150 years ago there were no nurses, and very few hospitals. Florence was a young lady in England. Her father was a wealthy businessman and Florence had all the money she wanted. Florence was a strong Christian and had a

real desire to help those who were sick. She felt that God was calling her to look after sick people, but her family and friends thought that she was crazy. They said, "Your family is an important family and they have lots of money. You should not think about sick people. You are young and pretty. You should be going to dances and parties and enjoying yourself. Forget about those who are sick."

However, Florence could not forget. She felt God calling her to help care for the sick people. A big war broke out between Russia and England called the Crimean War. Many men went from England to fight in the war. Lots of them were injured in the fighting and there was no one to look after them. Florence knew that God wanted her to go. She begged the government to give her permission to go. They said, "You are a lady. We can not send you to look after the soldiers." Florence kept on praying and eventually the government agreed. Florence recruited 30 other young women to go with her and they went to the war.

When she got to the battle lines, she was horrified at the conditions. No one was looking after the wounded soldiers. People were dying every day. The place was dirty and smelly, and people's wounds were badly infected.

Florence started to work. She organised her helpers and they cleaned the place from top to bottom. The nurses started to wash the patients and clean their wounds. They changed the dirty bandages. Florence also organised good food for the men. Instead of feeling helpless and hopeless, the men began to hope again. Before they were in so much pain that they hoped they would die, now that changed and they hoped they would live. At night Florence would light a lamp and go around and checking the patients and talking to them. She became known as "The Lady With The Lamp." They knew that she cared for them and looked after them, and this gave them hope.

After the war Florence returned to England. People heard about the wonderful work that she had done for the soldiers. Now she was famous. Nobody thought of her as being crazy. She had shown to



everyone that caring for the sick and wounded was an important work to do. She started the first school for nurses in England and from there the work of nursing spread around the world.



All of this happened because one person was filled with the love of God and obeyed God's call. Even though Florence was ridiculed and people tried to stop her, she obeyed God. Her obedience and kindness brought blessing and help to many people.

## THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Jesus told a story about the judgement that will take place at the end of the world, which we read in Matthew 25:31-46. All the people in the world were standing before the throne of God. Then they were divided into two groups. Some were sent to the right and some to the left. Then the King (Jesus) said to those on his right, "Come you who are blessed by my Father. Come and possess the kingdom ... I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me into your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me."

The people were surprised to hear these words for they said, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you into our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you? The king replied, "Whenever you did this for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did it for me."



Then the king spoke to those on the left hand and said, "Away from me you who are under God's curse! ... I was hungry and you would not feed me, thirsty but you would not give me a drink; I was a stranger but you would not welcome me into your homes, naked but you would not clothe me; I was sick and in prison but you would not take care of me." These people were again very surprised, but the king said, "Whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me".

The message is clear. When we do good, kind and helpful things to someone who seems very unimportant, it is just as if we were being kind and helpful to Jesus himself.

The reverse also applies. When we walk past someone or ignore them and we refuse to be kind and helpful and loving to others, it is just as if we are refusing to be kind and helpful to Jesus himself.

## **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

Joseph worked at a church health centre. Many times Joseph would yell at the patients and be real angry with them. They felt that Joseph did not care for them and did not want to help them. Was Joseph a good follower of Jesus? Discuss how he should have acted.

You are in a town and you see an old man looking in a rubbish drum for some food. He is a stranger to you and you do not know where he lives. What do you think a follower of Jesus should do? How can we demonstrate God's love for those who are very poor?

A man in your community is dying from AIDS. Many people in the community stay away from him for they are afraid of getting the disease. Some people say that AIDS is God's punishment and so we should not help him.

Read Luke 5:31-32. What does this tell us about Jesus attitude? What do you think Jesus would have done to this person? Would Jesus have stayed away or would he have gone close to him? What do you think the Christians in your town or community should do to show the love of Jesus to those with AIDS?

## Chapter 8

### We Must Put Jesus First

Many people were following Jesus, but they were following him for all sorts of reasons. Some followed him because they liked to listen to his teaching and the stories that he told. Others followed him because they liked to see the miracles that he did. Some followed Jesus just because everyone else was following him. Some people thought that Jesus would become the king and so they wanted to stay close to Jesus. Perhaps they might get work in the new government. But Jesus knew what everyone was thinking and so he said to them, "Those who come to me cannot be my disciples unless they love me more than they love father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters and themselves as well" (Luke 14:26).

Jesus does not mean that there should be fighting and arguing in our families. There should be love and unity in our families. Jesus is saying the same thing here that he said in Matthew 10:37-38, "Those who love their father or mother more than me are not fit to be my disciples; those who love their son or daughter more than me are not fit to be my disciples. Those who do not take up their cross and follow in my steps are not fit to be my disciples."

Jesus' message is clear. He must have first place in the lives of his disciples. Many missionaries have read these words of Jesus and obeyed them. They have left families and businesses to go to other countries to preach the gospel. Many pastors have left their homes, and their families and gone to other parts of their country to share the gospel with others. They have climbed over mountain ranges and crossed dangerous rivers in order to share Jesus with others. They have learned new languages and customs and have given years of their lives in order that others may know about Jesus and give their lives to him.

It is not just people from Western countries who go to other countries as missionaries to preach the gospel and begin churches. Every year many people from Asia, Africa, South America and the Pacific Islands go to other countries as missionaries. Some business people have remained in their home place running their businesses, but they give generously of their profits to help the work of the church. In this way they are showing that it is not the business, nor is it money, but it is Jesus who is most important in their lives. They show that they have heard these words of Jesus and are putting them into action. Jesus truly has first place in their lives.

## **TAKE YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS**

Jesus made another very strong statement. He said, "Those who do not carry their own cross and come after me cannot be my disciples" (Luke 14:27).

During the time of Jesus, the Romans were the rulers of the world. They had very strong laws and they expected everyone to obey them. If people were stubborn and refused to obey, the Romans were not afraid to kill them.

Often they would take someone who was stubborn or rebellious and would nail him to a wooden cross in public and leave him there until he died. They believed that this would so frighten everyone else that no one else would try to rebel. When someone was condemned to die on a cross, it was his job to carry the wooden cross to the place where they would kill him.

Jesus said that we need to carry our own cross and come after him. He meant that we need to follow him every day and to go wherever he sends us and leads us. We must do this and even be ready to die for him. He did not ask us just to follow him when things are going well, but in the hard times as well.

There is joy and happiness in following Jesus, but there are also times of tears and pain. The sun does not always shine; we also experience storm clouds and rain. But a real disciple does not give

up when the hard times come. He has learned to humble himself, pick up his cross and keep on following Jesus.

## **THE DISCIPLES CARRIED THEIR CROSSES**

When Jesus was walking beside the sea of Galilee, he called Peter, Andrew, James and John to come and follow him. But he did not tell them about everything that would happen to them in the future. They were happy to follow Jesus and gladly left their businesses and families and followed him.

At first their faith was not very strong, but Jesus taught them and encouraged them. He corrected them when they made mistakes and gave lots of time in strengthening their faith. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them and their lives were filled with new power and courage. Now they were ready to follow Jesus anywhere and everywhere, even to death itself.

James was the first to die. King Herod had his head cut off with a sword (Acts 12:1-5).

Peter was a strong preacher of the gospel and eventually went to Rome. He was arrested in Rome and they sentenced him to death. When he was told that he would be crucified, it is said that Peter had only one request. He said, "I am not worthy to be crucified in the same way as my Lord and Saviour. I do not deserve so great an honour. Please crucify me upside down, with my feet up and my head down."

Andrew went to many countries preaching the gospel, and eventually some people decided that they must kill him also. Andrew was also nailed to a wooden cross. His cross was shaped like a big 'X'. Today this sort of cross is known as St. Andrew's cross.

John was imprisoned on the island of Patmos. They thought that by putting him on a lonely island with very few people to talk to him that they would stop him from preaching about Jesus. But there on that island God showed him wonderful visions which he wrote down

and these became the book of the Revelation. John died on that lonely island.

Thomas travelled thousands of miles to India and began churches in that very distant country. He was eventually killed in India.

We do not have time or space to tell the stories of all the apostles, but they all gave their lives in service to Jesus. They truly took up their crosses and followed him until they died.

From the time of Jesus until after the year 300 A.D. the Roman empire worked to destroy the Christians. Some of them had to hide in caves. Some went to prison because they would not stop speaking about Jesus. Some were forced to become slaves.

In some of the big cities they had sports. But often these were blood sports. They would put some Christians in the centre of the arena and then they would release hungry lions. People would cheer and clap as they watched the lions kill and eat the Christians.

Others were covered with tar and oil and then burned alive. They did everything to try to destroy the faith of the Christians, but the devil can never kill the church of Jesus Christ. The church continued to grow stronger and stronger because they were willing to take their crosses and follow Jesus.

## **WHAT ABOUT TODAY?**

In many countries Christians have an easy life. There is no persecution, nobody is imprisoned for preaching the Gospel; in fact the government encourages the churches to preach the gospel to the prisoners. Some countries declare that they are a Christian country and so the government encourages the work of the churches. This is good and wonderful and we thank God for the freedom that we have. But this freedom can lead to a different problem in many countries today. We have many people who call themselves Christians but they are not real disciples. They are not committed followers of Jesus Christ and certainly do not want to think about carrying crosses.

They want to have a good time and live an easy life and still go to heaven in the future.

1. It was election time for the National Elections and I was talking to a pastor. He said, "It is selection time and very few people are coming to church now. Everyone is too busy following the candidates, and living off their money. But when the elections are all over and the money is all spent, then they will come back to church again." Have you seen people like that? Who is first in their lives? Are they real disciples? What does Jesus think about these people?
2. The highlands of Papua New Guinea gets a lot of money from coffee. One year when there was a lot of coffee and the prices were high, a pastor was talking to me. He said, "All this coffee money helps some people and destroys others. Some receive good money for their coffee and they give thanks to God and use the money wisely to help their families and also give their money to the church. But others think only of pleasure and parties and forget about God. They spend their time gambling and waste their money on all sorts of useless things. Then when all the money is gone they come back to church and ask God to help them."

Jesus said, "If any of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me. For if you want to save your own life you will lose it; but if you lose your life for my sake you will find it. Will you gain anything if you win the whole world but lose your life? Of course not!" There is nothing you can give to regain your life (Matthew 16:24-26).

What is the most important thing in these people's lives? Do you think Jesus is pleased with the way they live? What is the most important thing in your life? Money or family, or work, or something else?



3. Lucas went to the city to find work. Everywhere he went he heard the same answer, "Sorry. No work." He was desperate to get some work. He was willing to do any sort of work. Then someone offered him a job in a store selling beer. What do you think Lucas should do? Was this job an answer to prayer or a temptation?

Jesus said, "So do not start worrying: Where will my food come from? Or my drink? Or my clothes? ... Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things" (Matthew 6:31-33). How would this verse help Lucas decide what to do?

4. Peter was at high school and often in the dormitories there were lots of dirty stories and crude jokes. Peter wanted to be friends with all the boys, but he also wanted to be a real disciple of Jesus. What should Peter do? Have you ever been in a position like that? What did you do? Read Ephesians 5:3-5. How would these verses help Peter decide what to do?



## Chapter 9

# We Must Help Others Become Followers Of Jesus

**My Father's glory is shown by your bearing a lot of fruit; and in this way you become my disciples ... I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, the kind of fruit that endures. John 15:8, 16.**

The twelve disciples lived 2000 years ago, but disciples of Jesus are still alive today. For all truly committed followers of Jesus can be called disciples of Jesus. Jesus said that we must bear fruit. What did Jesus mean when he said that?

We can think of bearing fruit in two ways. The good qualities and characteristics of a life controlled by the Holy Spirit are like fruit. "The Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self control" (Galatians 5:22). When these qualities are present in our lives they make our lives attractive to others and pleasing to God.

When one Christian helps another person to become a follower of Jesus that can also be described as bearing fruit, for we all know that fruit contain the seeds from which other trees or plants may grow.

Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, "Come with me and I will teach you to catch people" (Mark 1:17). Jesus wanted the disciples to bring other people to him and to help them also become disciples. When Jesus was ready to return to heaven he gave these commands to his disciples.

Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptise them ... and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20).

Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to all people. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved (Mark 16:15-16).

In his name (Jesus) the message of repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations (Luke 24:47).

When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

This is the work that Jesus gave to his disciples. He wants them to be successful and that their work should be fruitful. Jesus did not tell them to just go and preach. Their preaching must produce results. The people who hear must believe in Jesus. They must turn from their sins and repent. They must show their faith by being baptised and they must go on to become strong disciples of Jesus.

In this book we have been talking a lot about what it means to be a disciple. We have looked at these main points. A disciple must:

- Hold strong to the Word of God.
- Be a person of prayer.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to fill his or her life.
- Bring other people to Jesus.
- Live a life of love.
- Take up his or her cross and follow Jesus.

Now we come to our last point. A disciple must help others to become disciples. This is the most important point of all.

Many Christians are very happy when they hear that someone else has decided to give his or her heart to Christ. But often Christians do very little to strengthen new Christians. They seem to think that it's the pastor's job to strengthen the new Christians. But new Christians are just like spiritual babies. They need a lot of help

and care if they are to grow and become strong. In many cultures, a mother will have some young girl to help her look after the baby, in the same way Christians need someone to help and encourage them. If older Christians would become like a big brother or big sister to every new Christian, then this would be a big help to them.

Becoming disciples is a process that goes on and on. Jesus chose twelve people to become his disciples. He told them to go and make disciples everywhere they went, their disciples were to make other disciples. Those disciples were to make even more disciples.

If we really do this you will see churches start to grow and keep on growing. More and more churches will be started until the world is covered with Christians.

## **THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

On the day of Pentecost over 3000 people repented of their sins, believed in Jesus as their Saviour and were baptised. The apostles were thrilled, but they knew that they had a big responsibility to help these new believers grow in their faith in Christ. They gave lots of time to teaching and strengthening the new believers.

Read Acts 2:42-47 and see what the apostles and new believers did :

- They learned from the apostles.
- They took part in the fellowship.
- They shared in the fellowship meals.
- They spent time in prayer.
- They continued together in close fellowship.
- They shared their belongings with one another.
- They met day after day as a group in the Temple.
- They had their meals together in their homes.
- They worshipped and praised God.

And, every day the Lord added to the group those who were being saved.

The apostles gave lots of time to strengthening new believers. The new people who were believing in Jesus grew in their faith and they too became disciples of Jesus. Acts 6:1 says, " ... the number of disciples kept growing ... ".

## **ANANIAS AND SAUL**

Saul was a young Jewish leader. He was very clever and had studied under one of the most famous Jewish teachers. He was very strong in following the laws and traditions of his Jewish ancestors. He rejected Jesus and became the enemy of all who trusted in Jesus. Saul did all he could to destroy the name of Jesus. He was determined to stamp out the name of Jesus, and he tried to get the followers of Jesus to reject Him. He beat people, put them in prison and gave them all sorts of pain and punishment. He hoped that he would be able to get them to curse Jesus and turn their backs on Him.

Saul killed some of the Christians, and many left Jerusalem and ran away. Saul was so angry that he was ready to go anywhere and everywhere to find Christians and put them in prison. He heard that some Christians had gone to Damascus. Damascus was the main city of Syria and about 250 kilometres from Jerusalem. Saul was so determined that he decided to go all the way to Damascus. He was looking forward to destroying a few more Christians.

But God had other plans. As Saul got near to Damascus, a very bright light shone from heaven and Saul fell to the ground. He heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?" Saul replied, "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom you persecute," the voice replied. Saul was shocked. He opened his eyes but found he could not see. The people travelling with him had to hold him by the hand and lead him into the city. He found a house where he could stay and for three days he neither ate nor drank. Instead he did a lot of thinking and praying.

God had a plan to help Saul. But God did not send an angel to speak to Saul. Jesus did not come back to speak to Saul. God spoke

to a man in that city and told him to go and see Saul. The story is told in Acts 9:1-19.

Ananias was a follower or disciple of Jesus living in Damascus. God spoke to him through a vision and told him to go to a certain house in a certain street and ask for Saul from Tarsus, as he is praying. Ananias was shocked. He said to God, "I have heard about this man and all the terrible things he has done to the believers in Jerusalem. He has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who worship you." Ananias was really afraid. He could not believe that God was telling him to go and visit their worst enemy.

God told Ananias to go to Saul's house and pray for him. God said that Saul had seen a vision of Ananias coming and praying for him that he would receive his sight. And so God told Ananias a second time to go and see Saul.

Ananias believed God and went and prayed for Saul. He even said, "Brother Saul, ... the Lord Jesus himself has sent me, who appeared to you on the road ... He sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes and he was able to see again. Ananias was convinced that Saul was now a true follower of Jesus Christ and went ahead and baptised Saul.

But what do you think would have happened to Saul if Ananias had been too afraid to go and see Saul? What if Ananias had said, "I'm too busy?" Or, "Lord send someone else." Some times God wants us to talk to others in order to help and strengthen there Christian life, but we make excuses. We say, "I'm to busy," or "That is the pastor's job" or "I do not know what to say." When we say things like that we disappoint Jesus and our lives become fruitless.

Acts 9:19 says, "Saul stayed for a few days with the believers in Damascus." What do you think Saul and the other believers did during that time? I am sure they did a lot of talking and different ones shared about how Jesus had helped them and changed their lives. I am sure that Saul had lots of questions that he wanted answered.



Then we read that Saul went straight to the synagogues (Jewish places of worship) and began to preach that Jesus was the Son of God. People were amazed for they had heard that Saul had come to Damascus to arrest all who believed in Jesus.

Verse 22 says that Saul's preaching became even more powerful. This would not have happened if the Damascus believers had not welcomed him into their homes and supported him when he first became a follower of Jesus.

## **BARNABAS AND SAUL**

Saul's preaching created a real stir in Damascus, and people tried but could not defeat his arguments. In the end they decided to kill Saul and he had to escape over the city wall.

Saul went to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They knew his past life and they thought that he must be deceiving them. They could not believe that he was now a follower of Jesus.

Barnabas was a Christian in Jerusalem. His name means "one who encourages". Barnabas was always keen to help a new believer and so he came to help Saul. He listened to Saul's story and decided that Saul was genuine and was truly changed. Then he introduced him to the other leaders in Jerusalem.

Barnabas shows us the character of a real disciple. He was not afraid of Saul, but took a risk and decided to be his friend. He listened to Saul's story and introduced him to the apostles. Barnabas brought Saul into the Christian fellowship in Jerusalem.

Saul was soon very busy speaking about Jesus in Jerusalem, but he had to leave Jerusalem because people were wanting to kill him. Some believers who had been persecuted in Jerusalem went to Antioch, and talked to friends and relatives there about Jesus. The people in this new church in Antioch were not Jewish people but Greek-speaking people. The apostles sent Barnabas to Antioch to strengthen the church there. Barnabas knew that he needed someone to help him and he thought about Saul. He left Antioch and went and



found Saul and brought him back to Antioch. And the two of them worked side by side for a whole year.

Barnabas believed that Saul would become a strong worker for the Lord, and so he encouraged Saul. This shows us another characteristic of a good disciple. A good disciple encourages other disciples and helps them get established in working for the Lord. He gives others work to do and checks up to see that they do it well.

Later Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church in Antioch on their first missionary journey. On this journey Saul changed his name to Paul and went on to become one of the strongest leaders of the church. God blessed the ministry of Barnabas and Paul.

Paul and Barnabas preached the good news in Derbe and won many disciples. Then they went back to Lystra, to Iconium and on to Antioch in Pisidia. They strengthened the believers and encouraged them to remain true to the faith.

The work of Barnabas had produced good fruit. He had helped another believer grow in his Christian faith and go on to become a strong worker in the church.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD DISCIPLE**

Ananias and Barnabas show us the marks of a good disciple:

- Ananias listened to God.
- He overcame his fear and went to the house of someone else. He listened to Saul and prayed with him.
- He strengthened Saul in his faith and brought him to meet other Christians.
- Barnabas overcame his fear and became the friend of Saul, even though other people were afraid of him.
- He listened to Saul and helped Saul become part of the Christian fellowship.
- He gave Saul some work to do.
- He encouraged Saul and was very happy to see Saul develop or grow in his Christian life and become strong in his work for the Lord.

## CONCLUSION

One man had a dream, and in his dream he saw Jesus talking with the disciples on the Mount of Olives. Then he saw Jesus ascend into heaven. He saw the gates of heaven open and Jesus went in through the gates and was met by thousands of angels. There was a huge choir of angels and they sang songs of praise and glory to God as they welcomed Jesus back to heaven. It was a wonderful time of celebration with all sorts of beautiful heavenly music.

Then in his dream he saw all the angels become very quiet as they listened to Jesus tell about all that had happened while he had been on earth. He told about the 12 disciples he had chosen and who had been with him for three years.

After he had finished speaking, one of the angels said, "Lord, you are all-powerful, all-wise and everlasting. There is no one to compare with you. What sort of plan do you have so that your kingdom will become strong and grow until it covers the whole earth?"

Jesus replied, "I have given that responsibility to 12 men, my disciples."

The angel looked shocked and said, "You left that huge responsibility in the hands of a few humans? What will happen if they do not do the job? What if they get lazy or frightened and do nothing? Do you have a back-up plan?"

In the dream, Jesus replied, "I told 12 men to go and make disciples of all nations. The Holy Spirit will strengthen them. I will pray for them. The work is in their hands, and I have no other plan."

The disciples did their part and went everywhere making disciples. Now they have gone to their reward and they are with Jesus. The work is now in our hands, for we are their replacements. They are in heaven watching us. What sort of disciples will we be?

Think again about the main points that we have studied:

- ☞ Jesus called his disciples and told them to go and make other disciples.
- ☞ Disciples must always be ready to speak to others about Jesus.
- ☞ Disciples must hold firmly to the word of God.
- ☞ Disciples must be people of prayer.
- ☞ Disciples must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can they be victorious over sin, and live lives that are pleasing to God.
- ☞ Disciples cannot be self-centred. Instead they must live a life of love.
- ☞ Disciples must give first place in their lives to Jesus and be prepared to take up their cross and follow Jesus.
- ☞ Disciples must help other people become followers of Jesus, who in turn will also help others become followers. This must be an ongoing process that continues until Jesus returns.

After praying and reading the text, list  
TEN NAMES

After praying and reading the text, list  
TEN NAMES

II Timothy 2:2		PRAY FOR	INVITED	ATTENDED	ACCEPTED	VISITED	BAPTISED
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
Mark an "X" in the blocks that you have fulfilled before, during, and after the campaign. For example when you pray for them, put an "X" in the square. When you visit them, or they attend, put an "X" in the proper square.							

Fill in the months below, mark the days you've set aside to pray and do pray for your Little Brother/Sister.

[illegible]