

Disciple of Jesus Christ

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Therefore, Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and be sure, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" Amen.

(MAT28:19-20) The above message was made by Jesus to His apostles, events after the resurrection of the dead and shortly before He ascended to Heaven, generally called "The Great Commission." Jesus was very clear on what He wanted them to do. Go and make disciples of all nations refers to the ends of the earth and to all peoples of the world. The word "disciple" comes from the Latin word "discipulus" meaning "student". It's literally means "a learner". It denotes "one who follows another's teaching" in hopes of eventually becoming what they are. A Christian disciple is a believer who practice of following the example of Jesus and then offers his own imitation of Christ as model for others to follow.(1CO11:1)

Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in our hearts, to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christlike. This process requires disciple to respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting to examine their thoughts, words and actions and compare them with the Word of God. This requires that we be in the Word daily—studying it, praying over it, and obeying it. In addition, we should always be ready to give testimony of the reason for the hope that is within us.(1PE3:15) That each believer should aspire to be used by the Holy Spirit as a "witness" as a "disciple" and as a "follower", who assists in the spreading of the good news/gospel of Jesus Christ. A disciple on the other hand is a student who has the goal of becoming like his teacher. *A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.*(LUK6:40) To be Christ's disciple, then is to strive to be like Him! This agrees with God's goal in the redemption of mankind, that they be conformed to the image of His Son.(ROM8:29) While a disciple is a student, one who learns from a teacher, an apostle is sent to deliver those teachings to others. We can say that all apostles were disciples but all disciples are not apostles.

There are some "identifying marks" of discipleship given by Jesus to identify a true disciple of Jesus. The first mark of a disciple is to accept the teachings of Jesus. A disciple is not only a pupil but also an adherent to the teachings of Jesus. They are followers of Jesus by what you say and do, by applying what He taught to everyday life. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it to the end.*(PSA119:33) The second mark of a disciple is abide in the words of Christ. Jesus said, *'If you abide in My word, you are really my disciples'*(JOH8:31) Abide means obey, practice make use of it. It is not simply enough for one to know the word of God but it should be obeyed. James 1:22, taught that those who 'only hear' are deceiving themselves. In the parable of the wise man, Jesus said, *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock"*(MAT7:24) Disciples of Jesus put into practice what He taught. Obedience goes step by step. Thus, one can grow 'up to the head of Jesus' When we apply His words to life, we discover truth, and that truth sets us free from spiritual bondage. The third mark that identifies disciples of Jesus is love. Jesus said, *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*(JOH13:34-35) The word Jesus used for love is "agape" —that expresses the fatherly love of God for humans. We're to have this love for each other — a sacrificial and forgiving love, a love that extends to others despite their faults and failures. We must have agape love to be called disciples of Christ. The fourth mark of a disciple is to bear much fruit. Jesus said, *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples"*(JOH15:8). Bearing fruit refers to doing good works such as honesty, modesty, love, etc. In the parable of the sower, Jesus said only the good soil produced a crop.(MAT13:1-9,18-23) This soil is the responsive hearts of His followers, and some yield a hundred times what was sown, some sixty times, some thirty times. When the Holy Spirit lives within us, we produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.(GAL5:22, 23) If we're led by the Holy Spirit, all of these fruits will be in our lives in abundance.

The fifth identifying mark of a disciple is making Jesus our number one priority. Is Jesus more important than anyone or anything else in our lives? Jesus helps us understand the intensity of this; *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple"*(LUK14:26) Jesus was telling us that our love and commitment to Him must be much greater in comparison to the most important things in our lives—even ourselves. The proof that we love Him more than anyone or anything else is our obedience to Him.(JOH14:23-24) In Luke 14:27 Jesus gave a sixth mark of a disciple: *"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple"* To carry our own cross means doing our part to grow into the character of Jesus Christ. It's our responsibility to put the spiritual disciplines into daily practice: being in the Word, prayer, worship, and fellowship. In carrying our cross as disciples of Christ, we die daily to self, and if need be, face martyr for the sake of Christ. Real disciples of Christ, carry their own cross daily and follow Jesus His way. The seventh mark is in Luke 14:28-33. Jesus said if a man is going to build a tower or a king is going to war, he must first count the cost to make sure he can finish what he's started. Then Jesus made statement: *"In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples"* It's our responsibility to count the cost to see if we can completely surrender every area of our lives to Christ. Surrender is giving it all to Christ. Peter began to say to Him, *See, we have left all and followed You.* (MAR10:28)

When we encounter Jesus, we meet the Lord who calls us to come and die in Jesus Christ, ie. death of the old man. Jesus calls us to come and die so that we might live. The only requirement is that we repent and cling to Him through faith. If we do this, we're promised forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation to God. The cross is laid on every disciple. We must experience the call to abandon the attachments of this world. And He calls us to follow him and learn from him. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and humble in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.*(MAT11:29)

A true disciple

- 2 -

Let's ask ourselves: Am I a true disciple? Do we have the marks of disciples? Do we willingly be openly identified with the person of Jesus Christ? Are we applying Christ's teachings, loving others, bearing much fruit—by way of Christlike character by influencing the lives of others? Do we love Jesus more than anyone or anything else? Are we seeking to be obedient to the Word of God in everyday life? Are we carrying our own cross and following Him His way? Do we remain faithful to His will even when it requires sacrifice on our part? Have we surrendered every area of our lives to Jesus?

The call to discipleship of Jesus Christ is the prime need of the Church, not as a membership of denominations. But mostly in our tradition, personal relationship with God is abandoned for a religious system where people are primarily members of a physical church. This is the root of denominationalism. When people are comfortable with membership of a church over and above their personal walk with God. They acquire a false sense of security based on observance of religious routine and rituals which act as a concession to the human conscience. The people are thus programmed to see loyalty to the physical church as superior to their loyalty to the God who is in heaven. In this state of ignorance, church folk can be manipulated to do the order of man rather than the will of God. Therefore, people may be attending church services regularly and work for God without knowing Him. *"I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal."*(ROM10:2)

God is reforming, restoring and renewing His Church. Part of that process is to empower the people of God with the right information which will lead them to have a personal relationship with Him. Flowing from that personal relationship they are taken through a process which will enable them to enjoy intimate fellowship with God and proceed to hear and respond to His call to service as co-laborers in His vineyard. May God grant that we may become His disciples by His grace.

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ means more just a casual church member. It requires commitment, especially in regards to the teachings of Christ, love of brethren, bearing fruit to the glory of God. The kind of commitment involved is seen further when we consider the "high cost" of discipleship demanded by Jesus. In other words, Jesus must be King and Lord of our lives. Nothing can take precedent over Him and His Will for us. Putting it simply, a person who follows Jesus and obeys His teachings would be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, who is committed and chose to be loyal to His way of life and teachings. The mark of a disciple is that he is someone who is identified with person of Jesus Christ, who will openly admit that he belongs to Christ. Let us consistent in our total submission to the teachings of our Lord.

But how does one begin? In Matthew 28:18-20, notice that disciples are to be made by "baptizing" them and "teaching" them. The first step we take, receiving Christ by faith through His grace, is the entrance into the faith and Christian life. In Romans 10:8-10, speaks of the key to enter the faith ie. faith in Christ expressed by receiving revelation of Him in the heart and confessing the same verbally. This grace makes it possible for men to enter the Kingdom. Baptism is an act of faith by one who chooses to identify his life with Christ. It is a public confession that you have been saved, you are dead to the old life, and risen to new life in Christ. It is the initial step of obedience and proclaim that he is a disciple of Christ. Baptism in water is a symbol of the death and resurrection of Jesus.(ACT8:38;ROM6:3-4;COL2:12) It involves a burial in water, in which one then rises to walk in newness of life through the power of God. It means by which you "puts on Christ"(GAL3:27) At baptism we enter into a covenant relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Then they are to be taught all that Jesus has commanded. They are to become Christian disciples. Baptism is the starting place for true discipleship!

A disciple continues in Christ's teachings. Remember the goal of discipleship is to be like Jesus. He is holy and sinless, So, we are to be like Him. Another characteristic of a disciple is that he obeys Christ's words, that those who have been baptized must be taught to "observe" or obey all that Jesus had commanded. *"You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings."*(JOH8:31) It is important that we continue abide in His words. ie is about abiding in God's presence. And with anointing of the Holy Spirit, they receive power, authority, wisdom, grace. In this way we embark on a life devoted to learning and doing all that Jesus has commanded us to do. And in serving the Lord as His witness and co-labourer.

There is an invitation for every Christian to enter into the Kingdom in its fullness. That invitation is call to discipleship, a call which draws a believer into a life of seeking after the Lord for a deeper, intimate relationship with Him. It is a state that makes you hunger and thirst for more of Him. You are processed daily to be like him from glory to glory, grace by grace, strength by strength until you see Him in the ultimate glory.(PHI3:7-14) For covenantal relationship with God, so that He can commission you to represent Him as His ambassador by the real anointing of the Holy Spirit that produces a transformed character and empowered witness. Dying to self, so that Christ may occupy the throne of your heart; Desire to see the character of God manifest in your life, this requires switching desires from yourself to Christ. In effect, it is an invitation to lose your self-life at the cross and take up His own life.(GAL2:20) Pressing into the fullness of the purpose of God in creating and redeeming you. Discover your spiritual gifts, talents to declare the gospel and advance the Kingdom. And coming to a place where Christ is the center of your life and where you find the fullness of satisfaction in Him alone.

These are some of the rewards that lie in store for true disciples: A life of true liberty in Christ with freedom from the bondage of the flesh (soul and body). A life free from the pressure of materialism and greed. This is the blessedness of owning nothing yet having all in Christ. A Christ honoring lifestyle wherein His yoke gives true rest to the soul and the joy of the Lord becomes the strength. The privilege of being a son of God, mature enough to hear His voice and being led of the Holy Spirit. The blessed life of seeking, discovering, fulfilling very purpose for which one was created and redeemed. Lord gives grace and glory; Trust and faith in God which yields up all that He has provided, godly wisdom as "pure" Having your needs met and lacking no good thing by His faithfulness. *Then Jesus asked his disciples, "When I sent you out without a wallet, traveling bag, or sandals, you didn't lack anything, did you?" They replied, "Nothing at all."*(LUK22:35)

In Matthew 16:24–26, the Lord Jesus Christ said to those who were following Him and made an astonishing demand on them. *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* It was made in strong message which required them to respond one way or the other. He laid out for those who, though called, wanted to be chosen for a more intimate, closer relationship with Him called discipleship.

"If any one" - The Lord established clearly the fact that to be a disciple of Christ rather than a mere believer is a matter of choice. The Lord does not force people to serve Him against their own will. Saul on the road to Damascus, the Lord still gave Him a choice whether or not to yield to Him. *"So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.*(ACTS 9:6)

"Desires to come after me" - Jesus made it clear that the ultimate destination or the highest goal of the Christian life consists of coming after Him. A true disciple is one who pursues the Lord, compete with Him in every area of their life; thoughts, words and deeds. He must die to his own desires and personal wishes, and places Christ at the center of a life.

"Let Him Deny Himself" - Deny means to insist that you are not associated with someone. To deny yourself means to forget your own self-interest. Self is the combination of the soul and the body make up the carnal nature. This nature likes to be in control and hates to be vulnerable before God and men. Self likes to occupy the throne of the heart; the very place reserved for Jesus to dwell as Lord. Therefore no one can possibly be a true disciple of Christ and still be in control of their own life. A disciple is of necessity one whose will be wholly subsumed by the will of God. We are called to sacrifice their lives for God's kingdom and give up our worldly lives and dedicate ourselves to Christ. First step to entering into a fruitful joyful discipleship relationship with Him is to deny yourself, the simple pleasures in life.

"Take up His cross" - Discipleship involves the conscious decision to identify with the cross of Jesus Christ. To carry your cross meant that you were dragging it along and eventually you reached the place where soldiers would crucify you. Therefore, Jesus' point is that you must be so committed to denying yourself that you are willing to die for Christ. The cross is the ultimate symbol of rejection, pain and suffering. Jesus here invites those who desire to follow Him to count the cost and decide if they really want to go further. It is a life where one is expected to make difficult choices, that may require us to be accused falsely, suffer wrongfully, yet be without sin, committing everything into the hands of He who judges righteously. To take up our cross is to identify with the suffering of Christ, it is to participate with Him.

"And Follow Me" - This is an invitation to follow the Lord up to Golgotha, the place of the skull. It is an invitation to die with Him so that He may live in and through us. Paul explained the secret of his outstanding life and ministry. *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*(GAL2:20) It is out of a crucified life that divinity in its fullness to touch lives in a mighty measure. The devil knows that the powerful Christian life is one which is crucified, therefore wholly yielded to the will and power of God. But without the cross robs the faith of transformed life. *I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me,*(GAL6:14) An illustration of following Christ happened in Luke 5:1-11, were the disciples had "left everything and followed Him."

Then Jesus said losers are the spiritual winners: *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*(MAT16:25) Believers have a choice to love self in this present world or to lose it in this present life and be rewarded with eternity. Those who refuse to pay the price and chose not to die to self may seemingly enjoy life now for a short season, vanity. They will discover their foolishness when they face eternity separate of Christ. The uncrucified life will always gravitate to sin and it will separate man from God. Therefore, embracing the cross and allowing our carnal nature to be crucified.

The conditions for true discipleship are Jesus made clear what was involved. First, we are to surrender ourselves to Him completely. Second, we are to identify with His suffering and death and Third, we are to obediently follow Him, and trust His word, no matter what the cost, or how difficult it may become. Of a truth, God extends this call to all who significance to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. Savior is He who will promise that souls do not perish in hell's eternal fire. The Lord is He who will rule your life and determine what you say, think and do. Jesus can only assurance a place in heaven as Savior to only those who have submitted to His Lordship. Hence, every believer is called to be a disciple of Christ. It is not an option reserved for a few in a church. The gospel is about producing disciples of Jesus Christ rather than mere believers who lack commitment. The Great Commission which begins with leading people to receive Christ in their heart as Savior and a lifelong process of enthroning and maintaining Him as the Lord of their lives. This is the principal objective of the teaching ministry. The Word of God is thus applied systematically as food to nourish the inner man to maturity in Christ. As many as respond to the Call of Jesus thereby secure for themselves due consideration as the chosen ones - *So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.*(MAT20:16) Those who will stay on course until the end are deemed as the faithful. Revelation 17:14 gives us a profile of those who will make it to the end: *for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.*

My prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that I have been saved by grace thru faith in Christ. Lord, I want to be a disciple of Jesus. I realize that to become a disciple, I must deny myself. I now understand that I must lay my entire life on the sacrificial alter, as a willing offering. May I be prepared to say 'not my will but Yours be done', help me to deny myself, take up my own cross and follow Jesus, willingly and joyfully - to Your praise and glory - I ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Discipleship

- 4 -

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.(MAT7:21) Those who follow Jesus by faith are known as His disciples. At the heart of following Jesus is Jesus' call to imitate him and reproduce him. As disciples, we are called to imitate Jesus' love (JOH13:34), his mission (MAT4:19), his humility (PHI2:5), his service (JOH13:14), his suffering (IPT2:21) and his obedience to the Father (1JO 2:3-6). Since He is our Master, we are to learn from him and strive in the power of the Holy Spirit to become like him (LUK6:40) This growth in Christ-likeness is a lifelong endeavor by the hopeful expectation that one day we will see him face to face.(1JO3:2-3)

Christianity without discipleship is like Christianity without Christ. God does not ask us to seek just converts, He simply asks us to do Discipleship. Discipleship is modeling and teaching Christians the precepts of the Bible—mainly prayer, doctrine, Christian living, service and worship. A call is extended to you and a response is required! You have been given a precious and wondrous call with passion and conviction. "Follow me." We all are called to make disciples! There are two kinds of people who cannot disciple, that is one who is not a follower of Christ or one who disobeys God's command. Discipleship means that the Christian is totally surrendered to Jesus and follows His teachings. Examples of discipleship can be found in the Gospels. Jesus called twelve men to follow Him. They dropped everything they were doing and committed their lives to following and learning His ways.(MAT4:18-22) When Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," there was action. "And they straightway left their nets and followed him." Jesus then saw two brothers, James and John, mending nets, called them. They immediately left the ship and their father and followed him. Jesus passed Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: he said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.(v.9:9)

Hindrances to True Discipleship: In Matthew 19:16-26, When a man asked Jesus, what he had to do to inherit eternal life, He said, "if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." and He enumerated some of them. Then the man responded, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." This grieved the man and he did not follow Jesus because he was wealthy. In response to his action, Jesus pointed out to his disciples that it was hard for those with riches to enter the kingdom. When told this, the disciples thought this was a hard saying, and wondered if they could ever enter the kingdom. Jesus said, *With men this is impossible, but with [grace of] God all things are possible.* As Jesus and His disciples were traveling along the road, they encountered three half-hearted followers.(LUK9:57-62) The first man was quite sure that he wanted to follow Jesus anywhere and everywhere. He was self-confident, unduly eager and unmindful of the cost. He said to Jesus in "I will follow You wherever You go." But from the answer Jesus gave to the man who expressed eagerness about following Him. We can sense that the man's intentions were not altogether honorable. He saw the crowds, the miracles, the enthusiasm of the people. It seemed good to him to be closely associated with the One who was at the center of all this action. So, he wanted to be a disciple of Christ, but he failed to understand the self-denial, the sacrifice, and the reproach that went along with serving Christ. Jesus said, *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head"*

Jesus was saying, Do you really know what it means to follow Me? Are you aware that it often involves forsaking the comforts and conveniences of life! Those who think of a shallow commitment to Jesus, may as well not apply! About the same time, Jesus saw potential in another man who was standing close by. Jesus spoke to Him—and tried by saying, *"Follow Me"*(v59) This man however wanted to delay becoming a disciple, because he claimed to have commitments to his parents. After his parents were dead and buried (which could have been many years later), then he would follow. Jesus told the man that his first duty lay with serving God. Jesus was saying, *"Let the (spiritually) dead (that is, those who reject God's grace), let them take care of burying the physically dead."* Jesus was not suggesting that we dishonor our parents, but we do not permit our love for family to fail our love for the Lord. The third incident centers around a man who said, *"I will follow You, Lord; but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house"*(v 61) This man had a reasonable and proper request, but even the common courtesies of life must not interfere with complete dedication to the cause of Christ. Jesus said to the man, *"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."*(v62). To plow in one direction while looking in the opposite direction will never do! Once we put our hands to the plow in the Master's field, we must not look back, longing for the things we left behind. Service in God's kingdom requires staying with the task at hand. No diversions from focusing on loyalty to Christ are permitted. No distractions are allowed. It is easy enough to start out well, and to burst forth in a blaze of glory, but the test of a real decision—is to endure to the end! Jesus saw more deeply into the three responses. He knew whether the commitments were real or only half-hearted. He saw heart attitude which prompted responses. The first man professes utmost willingness to follow Christ but material comforts hinder. The second man indicates a degree of unwillingness to follow Christ—because a task (or a job) is hindering. The third man seeks permission to delay following Christ—he has trouble leaving his family and friends. Each of the above responses is typical of the kinds of excuses that are sometimes given today. Jesus said that a believer who was unwilling to be a disciple was as useless to God as salt that had lost its savour.(LUK14:34-)

We must always remember that apart from the sustaining and empowering grace of God we can do nothing. *he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*(JOH15:4-5) As we follow Christ, we're constantly made aware that we need God's grace. As we seek to follow Jesus together and daily be transformed into his glorious image.(2CO3:18) May we faithfully follow Christ, help others to do the same until we see His face. Praise the Lord!

The Cost of Discipleship

- 5 -

In Luke 14:25-35, scripture reveals the conditions of discipleship very clearly. The theme of God's kingdom, its demands on potential disciples is mentioned. There Jesus spoke about a man who had laid a foundation for a tower, but couldn't complete it, because he was unable to pay the cost of construction. That proves that it does cost something to be a disciple. Jesus told us to sit down first and count the cost before even starting to build. The parable of the king planning a military campaign, is an example of a leader who under estimates the strength of his enemy, and therefore submit to the enemies' terms of peace. The lesson of the parables is: It's important to count the cost before making significant decisions in life. The other possibility to counting the cost are embarrassment, loss of time, loss of money. And so it is with discipleship. Discipleship is not to be entered lightly. We must sit down first and count the cost—and be certain that we are willing to abandon our lives wholeheartedly to Christ. If we start out, then fail along the way, onlookers will tend to mock. Half-hearted Christians do not make a favorable impression on their associates. To take a vow to follow Christ is an important step; we must not be unfaithful and insincere in our decision. Jesus told people about the cost of discipleship as soon as they came to Him. This kind of "high cost" of discipleship demanded by Jesus caused many people to turn away from following Him. It soon declined down to a handful of only eleven disciples. The others found the message too hard, and left Him. But it was with those eleven disciples who stayed on with Him, God accomplished His purposes in the world. *From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*(JOH6:66)

There were, among the crowds followed Jesus, some who were sincere disciples, and some who were obvious enemies. But Jesus was looking for people who had a wholehearted interest in His cause. He knew that some wanted only to see miracles and healing. Others heard that He had fed the hungry. Some hoped He would overthrow Roman empire and set up a new kingdom. Discipleship calls for sacrifice. For a believer to become a disciple, he must first of all cut off undue love that we have for our relatives and friends that hinders him from following the Lord. Secondly, he must be willing to deny himself and put his self-life to death, dying to self-daily. Thirdly, he must give up his love for material possessions.

Jesus urge His followers to leave every thing behind! Jesus said *"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, he cannot be My disciple"*(v26) What does it mean to 'hate'? We are asked to put to death is the natural affection that we have for our relatives. When we give up our human affection for them, God will replace it with divine love. Our love for our relatives will then be pure - in the sense that God will always be first in our affections. We must first love Jesus Christ. Every other relationship must be submissive to that, because of decisions we have to make out of our love for our Lord. No concern about family ties must ever be allowed to cause us to deviate from full obedience to the Lord Jesus. Many don't obey God because they are afraid to offend their father, mother, wife, etc. Lord demands first place in our life, if we don't give that place, we can't be His disciples. Look at Jesus' own example when He was on earth, He never allowed relatives to influence Him away from the perfect will of His Father. We see at the marriage at Cana where He refused to act on His mother's promptings.(JOH2:4) Jesus taught us how to 'hate' our brothers. When Peter tried to turn Him away from going to the cross, He turned around and rebuked him. He said, *"Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to Me"*(MAT16:23) Peter had made his suggestion with human love, thinking of his own self-interest. Jesus rebuked him, because what Peter had suggested was contrary to the Father's will.

After His resurrection, the Lord asked Peter whether he loved Him more than everything else on earth, before making him a shepherd in the church.(JOH21:15-17) Only those who love the Lord supremely are given responsibilities in His church. *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.* They had lost initial devotion for the Lord(REV2:1-5) If we can say, *"Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You,"*(PSA73:25) Then we have truly fulfilled the first condition of discipleship. The second condition of discipleship is that we must hate our own self-life. Jesus said *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own life, he cannot be My disciple"*(LUK14:26,27) We must be willing to suffer for Christ. *Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude,* (1PE4:1) The "cross" is suffering that is ours because of our relationship to Christ. The "cross" is reproach and contempt we receive from others because we try to follow God's standards in our daily life. The Cross of Christ was regarded as the manifestation of God's love, it normally go-with the decision to follow Christ and to give one's life out of love, as he did.

Is the cost worth it? In Luke 9:23, "deny himself and take up his cross daily" means, it is a daily duty to humble ourselves, to renounce sin, and to submit to the law of Christ. And therefore submission to the law of Christ which is the law of the cross.(JOH15:20-21) One must count the cost and not look back after taking up the cross.(LUK9:57-62) To deny our self is the same as to hate our own life—the life that we have inherited from Adam. To take up the cross is to put self-life to death. Bible calls 'the flesh' is a store-house of evil lusts within us that tempts us to do our own will at all times. Unless we hate 'flesh', we will never be able to follow the Lord. Peter said, "See, we have left all and followed You."(LUK18:28) Our possessions are what we possess as our own. All that we have must be laid on the altar and given up to God. Only then can we love God with all our heart. A pure heart means that we have given up everything! So, true discipleship involves essential change of attitude towards: (a) our relatives and loved ones; (b) our self-life; and (c) our possessions. Jesus is exhorting each disciple to surrender body, soul, spirit to the task of serving Him whole-heartedly. Disciple of Christ must continue to run the race. It costs everything! However, the rewards of being discipleship are limitless as we are entrusted to a Savior who loves us and rewards us more we could ever comprehend. He desires the best for us, He has a plan and purpose for us in the kingdom of God and He wants us to spend eternity with Him. Crowns are given for victory in the Christian life. But we will all cast our crowns before Him and worship in recognition that all we have done is by His grace that we become disciples of Christ.

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers"(LUK 22:31,32) Satan, the Devil, is a spirit being, with intelligence, and whose goal and ambition is to "steal, kill, and destroy"(JOH 10:10) Of the three great enemies of the Christian, the world, the flesh, and the devil, the last is the most dangerous. There is nothing that makes an enemy so dangerous as the fact that he remains hidden or subtle, therefore little known. The devil has the power of darkness: he blinds the eyes, so that men do not know him. He surrounds himself with darkness, so that he is not observed. He has even the power to appear as an angel of light.(MAT 4:6;2CO4:4;11:14) that he is called the deceiver of the whole world.(REV12:9) When the Lord Jesus was on earthly ministry, His great work was to overcome Satan. "*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil*"(1JO3:8b) He was filled with the Spirit; this fullness of the Spirit brought him into contact with Satan to combat him and to overcome him.(MAT4:1,10) He saw the enemy of God and man.(MAT12:28) His whole work was to destroy the works of Satan, as He shall also at His Second Coming utterly bruise Satan himself.(LUK10:18;ROM16:20;COL2:15;2TH2:8,9) Lord, gives us a fearful insight into the work of the enemy. Satan has eagerly desired you; He sifts and all that falls through with the chaff he endeavors to take for himself.(1CO5:5;1TI1:20) Our security is in the intercession and guidance of Him who overcame Satan.(EPH6:10,12,16) Satan was defeated on Calvary by our Lord Jesus. Our calling now is to register that victory over the forces of darkness everywhere we go. "*Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*"(JAM 4:7) One of the most important principles of warfare is to know your enemy. "*Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*"(1PE5:8) If you are fighting a war and you have a lot of information about your enemy, it makes the battle so much easier. It is exactly the same with the Christian life. If you know your enemy, you can overcome him and be more than a conqueror in every temptation. There are many Christians who struggle throughout their whole lives trying to follow Jesus, but fail. The main reason is they know nothing about their enemy. Recognize that we are engaged in a spiritual battle/warfare. *Thou therefore endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*(2TI2:3) Satan and demons(evil spirits) are our enemies. The Bible tells us that Satan came into that Eden garden and brought sin and confusion, leading Adam and Eve away from God. The cause of all the sin, violence and evil that there is in the world today is found there in Satan's entry into garden.(GEN 3) Once you know what the scripture teaches about Satan, you will be careful. And you won't be afraid of him any longer. Many are afraid of people doing black magic or witchcraft on them, because they don't know that our Lord Jesus defeated Satan on Calvary. When Jesus died he made the devil powerless.(HEB2:14,15) So that we might be forever free of Satan and the bondage of fear that he had put on us throughout our lifetime. He does not hold the power of death over those who are in Christ Jesus, who have been redeemed by Christ's blood. You will never again be afraid of Satan, once your eyes have been opened to what the Lord has done for us all on the cross. There is power in the mighty Name of Jesus, and blood of Jesus who defeated Satan on Calvary's cross. Jesus died not just to forgive your sins but also to deliver you from the power of Satan that has enslaved you. Remember that the head of Satan has been thoroughly crushed by our Savior. God will always be on your side against Satan. This fact has brought so much encouragement, comfort and victory to many saints. You have been given power over the Devil! By submitting to God, exercising your authority in the name of Jesus, you are more powerful than the enemy.(1JO4:4) The Bible tells us to not "give place" for the Devil(EPH 4:27) That is, provide no area of your life where Satan can be establish strongholds. The enemy can always be found working in those who entertain sin, disobedience, rebellion or a self-willed nature. Fame, power, and authority are so enticing that many people embrace wickedness in their drive to be known and followed. Men lie and cheat in order to climb the business ladder. Some lie and stab others in the back in their pursuit of the highest offices. Unforgiveness toward others is another area which Satan flourishes.(2CO2:11) Therefore these should be confessed, repent, renounced and forsaken. "*in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.*"(2CO2:11) His method of operation is almost always subtly. He manipulates hindering circumstances and inspires evil thoughts, temptations, disguising his activities behind the covering of people or things. He will always seek to divert attention and blame for his actions upon others. But make no mistake, he is the real enemy, not human being or Christian brethren!(EPH6:12) Pray: "Lord Jesus, open our eyes to know our enemy and his schemes".

Jesus Overcomes Satan: Satan presents Jesus with a prize — authority over all the kingdoms of this world.(MAT4:8-11) This rule is not sinful in itself since the Messiah is promised reign over the nations.(PSA2:8) The problem is the means the Devil offers. Worship of a false god, the evil one himself. Satan is tempting Jesus to take a shortcut and bypass the cross to receive the name by which immediately to a position of authority in the world. Remember that Satan can even misquote Scripture if he can lead you astray thereby. Jesus said, "*Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve'*" The glory of the world is the most charming temptation to the unthinking and unwary that by which men are most deceived. The pride of life is the most dangerous snare. Jesus was tempted in every way as we are. Though He was fully God, He endured the temptation of Satan. Throughout His temptation in Luke 4:1-13, Jesus maintained His integrity by holding firm against all Satan threw at Him. Adam failed this test. Instead of submitting to the Creator God, he embraced godless autonomy. He ate the forbidden fruit so that he could be a law unto himself instead of looking to the Almighty to define right and wrong.(Gen.3) However, Jesus did not make the same mistake. He is faithful to His Father's will. Jesus did not avoid the cross in His drive to regain the righteous dominion. He did not become an idolater. Thus, Jesus triumphs over Satan. This is good news for us. In staring down temptation, Jesus is able to help us when we are tempted.(HEB2:18) Jesus can strengthen us to defeat the enemy. It is by humbly submit to God; the devil will flee from you! *Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.*(1JO2:14)

Believers often ask, "What is God will for me?" This struggle is quite common. It often follows the insistence that if you just try hard enough, you will hear the Savior's voice. And who doesn't want that? After all, Heavenly Father said of Jesus, "*This is my beloved Son: hear him*" (MAR9:7) In everyday situations of life, believers are constantly making choices which determine whether or not they will do the perfect will of God. We want to know His general plan for our lives. We want His guidance in specific decisions so we can make wise choices. The question we should be asking is, "How can I know the voice of God?" Knowing God's voice results in finding the will of God, and makes right decisions. Man must make choices in relationship to God's will. This plan was instituted by God when Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden. (GEN1:3) Bible verifies that believers can know the voice of God. Jesus said: *I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine. . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* (JOH10:14,16,27) God has a plan for intimate relationship with mankind. "Knowing God's Voice," implies that there is a God. He communicates with man, that man can recognize His voice when He speaks. We are also warned: *So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.* (HEB3:7)

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world. (ICO14:10) The voice of man is easy to recognize. The voice of Satan was first heard by man when he spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden. (GEN3:1,4,5) Satan's voice lies, deceives, and always attempts to lead man into sin away from God. (MAT4:1-13) Believers are compared to sheep. Jesus said His sheep would know His voice and follow Him instead of the voices of man, self, or Satan. *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left*" (ISA30:21) The Lord is teaching us what it means to walk by the Spirit. With respect to God's Voice and guidance, as a child we learn to listen and God does lead us along as little sheep. But when we are older in Him and have some experience with His ways then He expects us to rely more upon the Spirit and less upon experience. *"Speak, Lord, For Your Servant Is Listening"* (ISA3:1-10) We may think of prayer as just talking to God, rarely stopping to wonder if He might want to talk to us. God encourages us to turn to him in prayer at all times and for all occasions. However, if we are only talking to him, then the conversation is one-sided. So you're still left yearning to hear him. How does God speak to us? (1) Through His Word. A familiar verse jumps off the page and takes new meaning. (2) Through people. Sometimes the voice of man may give wise advice, but anytime the voice of man conflicts with the voice of God. (3) Through His Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads, rebukes, encourages, comforts, and stretches us. The Bible is full of accounts of God speaking to His children. When God Speaks: The Greek word "Logos" refers to the written Word of God. "Rhema" refers to the living or life-giving Word of God. *in that they received the word (rhema) with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures (logos) daily.* A "rhema" Word from God usually applies to a specific situation, meets a personal need and provides individual guidance, it becomes a life-giving Word to you. This may be through a sermon or a verse from the Bible. It may also be spoken in your inner spirit by the Lord. The Bible speaks of two main divisions of listeners: (MAT7:24,26) A foolish listener hears the voice of God, but does not act upon it. A wise listener hears and acts upon the message of God. Let us ask the Lord for a hearing ear and a receptive heart. His sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd. He knows them each personally. He cares for them each day. At times, he has rescued them and carried them home on his shoulders. They trust him and listen to his voice. Listen to the voice of your loving Shepherd in the Bible, and you will know with certainty that you hear him.

If any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself (JOH7:17) If you meet these preconditions, then you will come to know God's voice and His will for your life. Because of sin, you have difficulty hearing and responding positively to the voice of God. But the Holy Spirit will continue to reveal God's will and guide you. As you mature spiritually, you will come to recognize this voice within your spirit. (ROM8:14) The milk and meat mentioned in verses refer to the written Word of God (HEB5:13-14) When you are first born again you start learning some of the simple truths (milk). As you mature, you are able to master the deeper truths (meat) of the Word of God. As you continue to study God's written Word, your spiritual senses will mature. You will be able to exercise them to discern good and evil. Your (renewing) mind is transformed as you develop the mind of Christ. You will be determined to do the will of God. Jesus said: *For I came down from Heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.* (JOH6:39)

The meaning of the word "will" is to determine or decide on the basis of the will. In Greek there are two terms used for the word "will" in reference to the will of God. One word is "boulema" which refers to God's sovereign will. This is His predetermined plan for everything that happens in the universe. The other word "thelema" refers to God's desire for man to experience and live in His will. It refers to His individual plan or will for each man and women. In order for God to fulfill His thelema will, it requires your co-operation, which refer seeking God's will. One other type of God's will is the "moral" will of God, commands revealed in the written Word of God which teach how believers should live. God's will was the chief concern of Jesus during His earthly ministry (JOH4:34) The purpose of Christ's life was to fulfill God's will. *Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?* (LUK2:49) Jesus was willing to die if it was God's will for Him to do so. (MAT26:39) This reveals His concern with finishing God's work through His life and ministry. The life of Jesus is a perfect example of absolute conformity to the sovereign, moral, and individual will of God. *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* (EPH5:17:6:6) Spiritual blessings are promised if you do God's will. (HEB10:36) You must know God's voice and be led by the Holy Spirit. The Perfect Will of God is accomplished when a believer is in perfect harmony with the moral, sovereign, and individual wills of God for his life. Samuel heard the voice of God, but did not recognize it until he was instructed by Eli. Let me hear what God the Lord will speak *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."* (REV3:20)

Therefore be imitators of God, as well-beloved children.(EPH5:1) To imitate God in your daily life is to make Jesus your pattern for living, that is doing the things that Jesus did, and not doing the things Jesus would not do. In this way you are putting on the new man. *And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.* (EPH4:24) Since making Jesus the pattern for our living is the way to put on the new man. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (ROM13:14) We need to look at the things Jesus did, His works, so that we can imitate Him. Now the works of Jesus had their beginning, that they flowed out of an attitude of obedience to the will of His Father. Jesus' attitude toward life was one of desiring to do the will of His Father and to please Him. Jesus says, "*My meat (that which fills me up, my desire) is to do the will of him that sent me*"(JOH4:34) Jesus do always those things that please the Father.(JOH8:29) How did Jesus know the will of the Father and how to please Him? Jesus gives the answer and to be our example. *the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*(JOH5:19)

Jesus never did anything on His own, He was not an independent thinker or doer. Rather than thinking and doing for Himself, He watched His Father and did what He saw His Father do. An attitude of obedience, total submission to the will of the Father. Being obedient to the Father, that is doing the things He tells us to do, without question is being a follower (imitator) of Jesus. And as we imitate Jesus we are becoming more like Him in our daily life. As we become more like Jesus, we will begin to enjoy a deeper and closer relationship with our Father. Being obedient to the will of the Father is to place yourself under the authority of God. It means to submit to God's authority. This means having trust and confidence that God's way is the right way. By obeying his call can grow in understanding of his heart and desires for our lives.

To be submissive is to have an attitude of obedience. Let us look at an example of obedience from Bible which results in the best and then an example of disobedience that brings bad results. In Genesis 12:1-4, God tells Abraham to take his family and all he owns and go! God tells him to leave the land of his father, where he grew up, and go to a place I will show you and if you obey my voice, I will give you land, children and blessing. So, this command came with a promise. Because Abraham had faith, he obeyed God. "*So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him,*" He did it even though he didn't know where he was going.(HEB11:8) God commanded Abraham again. This time, it was to offer Isaac, his only son whom he loved, as sacrifice him to God on Mount Moriah. Abraham passed that test as well. God blessed him according to His plan and purpose. Faithful obedience brings God's blessing on our lives. In 1 Samuel 15, says to King Saul, "*Now go and smite Amalek utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not;*(1SA15:3) Saul is instructed to destroy all- there was to be no spoils of the battle. But what did he do? Scripture show that he allowed the men to spare the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice on God's Altar.(v.14-15) In v.20 we see that King Saul had taken Agag the king of Amalek as a prisoner instead of killing him as he was told to do. Saul did not have an attitude of obedience. His attitude was, "I'll do what God wants me to do, but I will do it my way. We must interrupt God's word in the light of the circumstances and the situation. God didn't really mean for us to destroy all those perfectly healthy sheep and oxen it will please Him(God) when we offer them to Him as a sacrifice. "*To obey is Better than sacrifice*" v.22 Saul's disobedience was an act of rebellion, iniquity, and idolatry. It cost him the privilege of being King of Israel. Let us understand that disobedience will always cost us also. And that giving an offering to God can not make up for an act of disobedience. Only repentance will blot out the sin and bring us into that place of the refreshing presence of our God.

When we wanting to do something and have made up our mind that we are going to do it. When we are set on a course of action or going in a certain direction—and God says, don't do it, or Says, go this way, and we listen to God, rather than to our own wants; then we are moving into the realm of obedience. We are developing an attitude of obedience. Obedience is pure loyalty to our Lord. It helps us focus on Him and what He has done for us. Obedience is the willingness to cooperate with God, and with others in their godly directions and plans. We must become sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit—open minded to whatever the Lord would have us do. We must be willing to obey. We are to do things the way God wants them done, not the way we think, or the way we want God to want them done. We are told of Jesus in Hebrews 5:8, "*though He(Jesus) were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things he suffered*" That you learned it so well, and was so submissive to the Father, that you humbled yourself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Here in the Garden of Gethsemane we see Jesus in agony, praying: "*Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me;*"(LUK22:39-46) Jesus was looking ahead to the torturous death of the cross which was before Him. "*yet not My will, but Yours be done.*" Thus we see here Jesus as our example in the putting down of the desires of the soul and becoming obedient to the will of the Father even unto the death of the cross. "*He that doeth the will of God abideth forever*"(1JO2:17) Here then, we see the purpose behind our Father God allowing Adam and Eve, Jesus and us to be tempted by Satan, that we might learn to say no to sin through obedience. Now we who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we who are new creations, like Jesus are able to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Jesus. Christ himself set the example of obedience to the Father's will, we too can learn obedience. We can learn total submission and be an imitator of God as children of God. God creates the new man in His own image. So, we will be walking in the ways of God. Have you ever chosen to compromise God's commands in order for approval of people rather than the approval of God. God desires us to obey Him out of His love for us, because He wants what is best for us. In some circumstances that may be difficult to grasp, and so we choose not to obey. We all have areas of our lives where we desire to stay in control rather than following God's lead. Talk to God about your lack of faith in his wisdom concerning this command. Confess it as sin and ask for the grace to trust Him. Be silent before Him, asking for insight into what you may have to give up to truly live-in obedience. Ask Him if there are areas of compromise in your life. Ask Him for the grace to obey Him completely.

A good biblical steward is always mindful that he or she works for God. God is the owner. Good stewards take care of the gifts God has given them to manage. *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* (ROM14:12;1CO4:2) The word “steward” defines as a person entrusted with the management of the affairs of others. “Entrust” means to commit something or someone to one’s care for use or speaking. A steward manages the possessions of another. We are all stewards of the resources, abilities, opportunities that God has entrusted to our care, each of us must one day give an account for how we have used them. He will be concerned with what you did with your gift and talent. We are stewards of God's creation.

Consider for a moment that everyone on earth has the same amount of time in every day. They all have exactly 24 hours in each day. What differentiates people isn’t the amount of time available to them, but the manner in which they exercise their gifts and talents within the available time. We can waste time; we can spend time; or we can invest our time wisely. That’s what stewardship is about: faithfully developing and using our gifts, talents and resources within the amount of time God has allotted to us. In every stewardship relationship there are two parties involved: the master who hands out the resources and will one day ask for an accounting; and the steward who is entrusted with the resources and must eventually answer for how they were invested. God is the owner; he distributes gifts at his discretion. We are stewards, accountable to him for all that we do with all that we have. Herein the fundamental principle of biblical stewardship –We own nothing. God owns everything; we are simply managers. *“You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me. But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth’”* (DEU8:17-18) As humbling as this sounds, we don’t bring anything to the earth. *“The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the Lord”* (PSA24:1) He owns everything that he has made. everything that is. It’s all God’s. Since God owns it all, he has the absolute rights of ownership over all things. Since we only have what we have been allowed to have, we operate primarily in the realm of responsibilities. God has rights; we have duties and responsibilities. God has entrusted us with certain resources, gifts and abilities. These things rightfully belong to him. Our responsibility is to live by that trust by managing these things well, according to his design and desire. Since God owns everything and expects us to manage things according to his plan and purpose, every decision is a spiritual decision. Whether it’s buying, how we use our time and money matters a great deal to God. God demands to be in the loop on every investment, purchase and decision. Our answer to this question will determine how we manage the time, abilities, money, truth, relationships God has placed under our care. Therefore, understanding effective stewardship as it applies to ministry.

In the Parable of the Talents, in Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus taught about his second coming, he drove one important lesson: Only faithful stewards will be prepared for his return and be ready. Parable involved three servants who each received a sum of money from his master before that master departed on a long journey. This is an act of trust. Master gave each of these servants the opportunity of a lifetime. This was their chance to prove themselves, test their skills and possibly rise to positions of greater influence and responsibility. Upon his return the master discovered that two of the servants had invested the money, and that one had buried it. He took the greatest gift he would ever be given and buried it in a field, choosing not to believe that the master would return. Finally, master returned. When the servant who had buried the money began offering excuses, the master refused to accept them. Instead, he rebuked the lazy and foolish servant and punished him severely. Meanwhile, the faithful servants enjoyed the rewards they had received for their diligent labor. The master is generous, but he is also going to hold his servants accountable. He will reward for diligence and faithfulness; he will punish laziness. In Bible sloth was listed as one of the seven deadly Sins. Running around in a lot of extra-curricular activities (stay busy as a cover up for laziness) is sometimes away to avoid important responsibilities. They have never learned to say “no” which is important to our ability to keep God’s priorities before us. All our work should honor the name of God. To fail in this is a form of robbery from God. Talented is designed to help you recognize, develop, and use for good. This teaches us to your ministry and help you grow your faith, understanding of calling, work, kingdom investment.

In the parable of the Shrewd Manager, in Luke 16:1-12, Jesus is talking to His disciples, in preparing to be steward-leaders. He tells them the parable of the rich man who had a steward. This steward must have been fired for a very good reason. He was accused of wasting his lord’s possessions and the charge was brought to him. We can assume that he was guilty of the charge but since the man didn’t argue for his case. When this was told to the rich man, he called the steward to himself. All of his privileges were taken from him, and his lord demanded to know everything he had done. The steward had to give an account of his stewardship. The steward contacts all of the people who owe his lord and fixes their bills. The master liked what he saw and so commended him for being so shrewd. *“The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly.* Bible says that even the lord of that steward commended him on what he did because it was wise according to the world’s standards. Jesus is talking about stewardship of our resources because He says that if someone is faithful in a small amount, the Lord will entrust him or her with more and if we are unfaithful in the small things then we’ll be untrustworthy. Jesus commends the man’s ability to use his present and temporary power and resources to make preparation for what was coming. Stewards are expected to realize the maximum possible return on the resources which the master has entrusted to their care. *“Be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves”* (MAT10:16) Shrewd is a compliment, meaning taking advantage of hidden opportunities. Stewards work hard and “smart” to please their master. We should be wise, sharp, clever, alert, but also absolutely be people of integrity "innocent". But some go the extra mile and work “shrewd” possibility to serve God well! *“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness”* (MAT25:21,23)

So Jesus said to them again, *"Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."* (JOH20:21) After the Lord had fulfilled His mission on earth He ascended into heaven. And now He has given over His heavenly mission to his disciples, by the mighty spirit power to perform it. They must so represent Him. Every disciple must so be the image of Jesus and exhibit in his person and conduct the same love, grace and power. The purpose of the Royal Priesthood is to reveal glory and minister the work of the great High Priest of the heavens. (HEB 6:19-20) Priesthood is ministry to God and to men, and reconciliation. Priesthood is the spirit of the High Priest. It is caring, loving, interceding, forgiving, healing, teaching, and doing all necessary to bring lost and dying, sick, sorrowing, tormented and hostile men back to God. Priesthood is praise and worship and consecration and holiness unto the Lord. He is making many to be Priests after the order of Melchizedek that He and they may stand in ministry unto the Father. (HEB7:20) Prince of Peace refer to Jesus Christ. The second coming of Lord Jesus is to bring peace, He is a Priest-King who dispenses Righteousness and justice. *Therefore, holy brothers [consecrated and set apart for God], partakers in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.* The church shares in the priesthood of Christ. (REV5:10) How great it is to serve a living God! (HEB3:1)

God is now calling forth His people to come out of darkness into the light so that we can each become the light to the world that we are called to be. (MAT5:13-16) Our light shines brighter and brighter as we serve Jesus with our life. Jesus can shine through us. Disciples are "Salt of the earth and Light of the world" A salt' means to seek to influence people in one's life by showing them the love of Christ through good deeds. Salt enhances flavor, prevents decay so, by our very presence we should bring a sense of wellbeing to those around us and prevent the advancement of moral decay. Light is a symbol used to mean awareness, knowledge, understanding. Light dispels darkness so as we reflect the life, love, character of Jesus we help to open the way for others to get to know Him and so bring hope. Will you let your light shine? Will you help spread the gospel of Christ? Many dies in darkness, unconnected to the love, truth and grace of Christ. The purpose of this mission is to raise up Christian disciples who share the love of God and reach all people to the ends of the earth. Ministries through restoration, revival, renewal! *"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.* (ISA60:1)

Brethren, I count not myself to have taken hold of it: but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and do my best to reach what lies ahead, I press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (PHI3:10-15; 1CO9:25) Apostle Paul realized that being counted worthy before God was of vital importance and was constantly striving for the prize of the high calling. *"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death"* Paul wants to know Jesus Christ because He is our only way to God. And the fellowship of His sufferings, he wants to endure hardship despite his faithful life spent serving Christ. However, focus is on becoming "like him" in his death, he wants to die to the world of sin and temptation, so he can be fully transformed, in order to be like Christ. Otherwise, he will not be standing on heavenly Mount Zion with the Lamp. reign with Him, sit on throne alongside our Savior. Paul wants to know the power of His resurrection in his life, it is that same power that raised Jesus from the dead, so that one day he can attain the resurrection from among the dead that is going to take place. Paul knew that he was saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. And yet, he knew that there was this high calling to which he was not guaranteed. This is analogous to a runner in a race. Our everyday life in Christ is described as a race. All the while, we know that God has provided the way we're supposed to take. We get our start in the race of life and we're to keep continuing along on narrow way, *"let us lay aside everything that hinders, and the sin which so easily beset us, (i.e. burden) and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.* (HEB12:1) We must cast all our burden on the Lord and lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. We ought to live by faith looking unto Jesus, look forward to an eternity with the Lord. Every participant strives to do his best in the hope of winning the top prize. But no one is assured of that prize, yet everyone strives to be the winner. In a race, there is always the possibility of stumbling or falling. The runner may not even be able to finish the race. Not everyone would understand the meaning of high calling; but they should if they are mature. (JAM1:5; LUK18:17) Spiritual life is a growth to attain, a task to accomplish, a race to run, a course to finish—all triumphantly and at the same it is warfare to fight and overcome. By the Spirit, we can now conquer sin and grow in holiness. May you be strengthened with all power, so that you may have great endurance, patience, and joy.

for one star differs from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead" (1CO15:41-42) The Glory is seen from the Rock! The Rock is a picture of Jesus. (1CO10:4) We too have the promise of 'the hope of glory' but, we need to be standing upon and dwelling in the rock—the Lord Jesus Christ. He is only our strength, hope, and refuge. *"Who is this King of glory? The highest calling of all is to sit with Jesus on His throne. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.* (REV3:21) Jesus told to sit with Him on His throne they must drink of His cup of suffering and receive of His baptism. We are called to take step upon step till we reach Glory. Our mortal bodies are dying, dishonorable, and weak. But those are not the bodies which enter eternity. A transformation takes place, like what happens when a seed dies to give life to a new plant. The seed—our pre-death bodies—are something perishable. They are always wearing out on their way to an inevitable death. What is raised to life is imperishable, a body that can never die, a body that is both physical and eternal. Scripture shows that natural death is not the end of life for Christians; it is the last step before receiving a glorified, resurrected body like that of the risen Christ. That "spiritual" body will be as different from our current bodies. Each believer is presently waiting for the redemption of their body, the changes that God has promised to make to each one who believes. Final salvation of body will take place at the time of the resurrection -rapture of overcomers. At the resurrection death will have been defeated. *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where O death, is your sting? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1CO15:55-57) Hallelu-Yah!

