

# Acts In Action Training Series



## Foundational Lesson 4

### What Does It Mean to Be a Christian?





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## Introduction

Up to this point in the series we have been reviewing what the Bible tells us about itself, about Who God is and also about what it is that God has commanded us to do. Our next lesson is going to begin to look at what happens when a person has believed and what changes they will experience in their life. Not only will we talk about the changes that they will experience but we will also discuss the responsibilities that they have as a believer as well.

The reality is that the question of what makes a Christian should be an easy one to answer. Jesus made it very clear when He was here on earth that anyone who believes in Him will be with Him in heaven. The complication comes in, however, when we do not apply proper understanding or give appropriate weight to what the word “believe” means. And, there are no shortages of opinions. For many people it would refer to anyone who has said that they believe. Maybe they recited “the sinner’s prayer” at an altar call in the past and thus believe they are saved. Others would say that if you are a good person and work to do good then you are saved. And still others would say that it doesn’t matter what you do or choose because God has already chosen who He will save and who He won’t and therefore we in fact have no choice.

Because of these opinions and theories, we will not be, just as we have with the other lessons in this training series, using any reference to any source other than God’s Word itself, the Bible. The reality of a true Christian is that belief and salvation can, on the surface, appear to be a bit of a contradiction. It is completely free, yet it costs us everything. There is nothing we must do, or that we even can do, to gain it, yet it requires action. However, there is no contradiction in God’s Word and as we go through this lesson we will see that the Bible makes it very clear as to what being a Christian truly means. Before we begin let us pray.

Father, we are so blessed that we have Your Word. We are so blessed that we are able to come to You and to talk with You. Lord, as we go through this material we pray that Your Holy Spirit will be the true teacher and that You will reveal the truth to us. Lord, may we have wisdom beyond our understanding and may we understand that the truth. Lord, may we be encouraged in some areas and challenged in others to draw closer to You and to know You more deeply. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray, Amen and amen!





## A Christian Experiences a Metamorphosis

### 2 Corinthians 5:17 (EVS)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

I believe that when we think of the word metamorphosis one of the first examples that would come to mind is that of the caterpillar and the butterfly. Most of us remember this from our elementary school days when we learned about how the caterpillar goes into its cocoon and then later emerges have changed into the beautiful butterfly. The process of this change is called a “metamorphosis” and this in fact reflects what happens in a person’s life when they become a Christian.

### Romans 12:2 (KJV)

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect, will of God.”

The definition of metamorphosis is as follows: a change of the form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one, by natural or supernatural means. When we review the verse above we see the word “transformed” and this is true in almost all translations. However, when we dig deeper and study the original Greek that was used we see this word being the Greek word, “metamorphousthe”. This is the where the English word metamorphosis is derived. This English word indicated a more fundamental change than the English word transform. There is something that takes places on the foundational level when metamorphosis occurs. It is not simply a change in something or a rearrangement of what already exists. It indicates that a to change to something completely different. So much so that what exists after the metamorphosis is unrecognizable when compared to what existed before the metamorphosis. This is just as we see in the example of the caterpillar and the butterfly.

In addition to the metamorphosis which takes place we also see the words “by the renewing of your mind” used. In this portion of the passage the original Greek uses the word “anakainoó”, which can



literally be read as an ongoing renewal which is performed by God. This passage therefore indicates to us that a person, upon becoming a Christian goes through an initial metamorphosis in which they are changed into a new creation. However, this metamorphosis is not the end. Afterwards, God begins a process of renewal in that person's life by which they are further changed and refined. Another definition that is used for the word renewal in this context is: moving from one stage to a higher, more developed, one.

### **Philippians 1:6 (NLT)**

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”

As we can see, this process is neither a one-time occurrence nor is it something that a person is capable of doing on their own. There is an initial metamorphosis which occurs at the time a person believes in Christ, however, this point in time is not a destination but a beginning. It is from this point that the work of the Holy Spirit begins in the life of the Christian and over time, day by day, the Holy Spirit will change and refine a person preparing them path that the Lord has for them, a path that ultimately lead to that person entering into heaven and being with the Lord for all of eternity.

So how does this metamorphosis work and what actually takes place in a person's life when they go through it? As we continue to go through this section we will be talking about these details and what is to be expected. However, the first thing that must happen is a decision, the most important decision that a person will ever make.



## A Decision is Made

### **Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (NLT)**

“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the Lord, you will live long in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

The bible clearly tells us that each one of us has a choice to make. We can choose life or death. In an earlier lesson in this series we talked about what true life was as well as true death and that each one of us will make a decision as to which one we will experience. There will be no excuses and no free passes when it comes time for the judgement to be made. God has shown us what death looks like and He has shown us what life truly is and has given us the decision to make. We must also come to understand that we cannot choose to ignore this decision. Anyone who has not believed in Jesus has, by default, made to choose death. The decision that we must make is to reject and turn from death and choose to believe in Jesus. It is when we do not choose to believe in Jesus and reject this truth that we, as a result, choose death.

### **Ezekiel 18:20 (NLT)**

“The person who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent’s sins and the parent will not be punished for the child’s sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.”

We will all be held personally responsible for the decision that we make and we will each experience the consequences of the decision. We can influence others and live an example to others. We can try to teach others and guide them, but, each person must make this decision on their own and they alone will be held responsible for the decision that they make. A parent is instructed to teach their child in the way that they will go, but when the child has reached an age in which they are accountable, they will be



judged based on the decision that they have made. Likewise, a child, a brother, a sister, a friend, a husband, or a wife cannot live a life in which they can create salvation to have in another's life.

**Romans 10:9 (KJV)**

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Just as this decision is entirely personal, this decision is also to be taken with absolute sincerity. Just as you cannot earn salvation through works, you cannot earn salvation through mere words either. This decision, the decision to believe in Jesus, must come from a person's heart. A person cannot simply recite a few words such as, “sure, that sounds good” and be saved. There is a deep and fundamental shift that will take place when this decision has been made and from that moment on, a person's life will forever be changed. They will look back at that moment as being the moment when they entered the cocoon and the Lord began the metamorphosis within their life.



## A New Heart, Mind, and Soul

### **Ezekiel 11:19 (NLT)**

“And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart...”

As we learned at the beginning of this session, when we believe in Jesus we undergo a metamorphosis. This process affects every part of who we are. Our hearts will forever be changed. We will begin to have a heart that is after the things of God. A heart that is thirsty and hungry for the Lord and His words. Our heart will begin to place the feelings and needs of those around us above our own needs. Our hearts will begin to break for the things that break the heart of the Lord. We will begin to see others with the compassion and love that the Lord has for them and our desire will be to do for them what God would want us to do.

### **Romans 12:2 (KJV)**

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect, will of God.”

In addition, to changing our hearts to new ones, our mind will also undergo a similar process. Our thoughts and our thought process will begin to change as well. We will begin to think about the things of the Lord rather than dwell upon the things of the world. Our thought life, the things that we think about that no one else knows about, will begin to change. This change will represent a fundamental change in the way that we think and as this change occurs it will begin to affect our words and our behaviors as well. It has been said that the way a person thinks will ultimately be reflected in the way that a person talks and behaves. Because of this, when our mind is transformed to one that thinks of the things of the Lord, our words and our actions will change as well. People will begin to see the difference reflected in our lives and this change is a testimony to what the Lord can do in our lives.



**2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV)**

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”

When we have made a decision to believe in and follow Christ our souls become saved. Our souls which were in sin and in eternal separation from the Father are restored and made sinless. We are, through the blood of Christ, restored into a relationship with the Father and this change renews our soul. The renewal of our souls changes us on an equally fundamental level and the way that we experience life changes. Instead of a future of eternal separation from the Lord, we can move forward with the assurance of an eternity of relationship with our Father and with our brothers and sisters in Christ.



## A New in Motivation

### **Colossians 3:23 (NLT)**

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.

When we have believed in Jesus and have become a new creation, not only will our actions and our behaviors begin to change, our fundamental motivations will as well. Before a person believes in Christ typically they are motivated by selfish desires. They may be willing to do things that seem good, but, when it comes down to it, when things begin to become tough and they are not experiencing the return that they believed they would, they will stop. So much of their concern, if they are honest, revolves around the question, “what is in it for me?”

However, when we believe and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us, this area will also begin to change. Our concern will change from furthering our own interests to building the Kingdom of the Lord. Instead of doing things that we believe will be of benefit to ourselves we will think about what it is that God has called us to do and we will begin to put the needs and the feelings of others above our own. Whenever we are thanked for what we have done, instead of receiving that thanksgiving for ourselves, we will redirect it to the true source, the Lord. Our motivation will be to lift the name of the Lord high and to see all praise, honor and glory to Him and Him alone. We will not be concerned about what we receive but instead what we are able to give.

### **Genesis 6:5 (ESV)**

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

This motivation represents a striking difference between the way our society views life. Our society, and truly humanity in general, puts the focus of almost all of a person’s motivation directly on one thing, themselves. Think about it, so much of the intention that people live for is to achieve their own happiness and contentment. People are routinely told to find what makes them happy and follow their heart. This sounds very lovely on the surface but the reality is this is an evil lie. The truth is the Word of



God tells us that when apart from God every thought in the human heart is evil all of the time. So we have a world telling us to follow our own hearts desires and that our focus should be upon doing what makes us happy. Yet if we were to follow our heart and following the desires within it we would unleash absolute evil.

Our motivation changes, not after our own heart and our own desires, but towards intense pursuit of the heart of God and to do what He desires. Our focus is no longer about what we can achieve or even about our own happiness but it is instead focused on nothing but bringing joy to the Lord and obeying what He has told us to do.



## A New Allegiance

### **Philippians 3:20 (NLT)**

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.

As we have seen, when we accept Christ our lives fundamentally change. This change extends to our allegiance and citizenship as well. Each person is born somewhere upon this earth. Normally, the place that we are born in will determine the country that we are a citizen of. Anytime a person wishes to change their citizenship to that of another country there is almost always a long process that must be followed. This process is not trivial or to be taken lightly. In the event of a conflict or war the citizenship of a person could determine their fate.

Consider this example, two people go on a vacation to a different country. The first person is a citizen of country A and the second person is a citizen of country B. If war were to occur in the country they were visiting together the first citizen would need to go to the embassy of country A, while the second person would need to go to the embassy of country B. Their citizenship would determine where they had to go and where they were allowed to go.

### **Ephesians 2:19 (NLT)**

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

When we accept Christ, we immediately become citizens of heaven. This change in citizenship happens immediately and there are no other tests, rituals, oaths or any other activity that we must complete in order for it to occur. This citizenship will never change, no matter what country we are in, what the world we are visiting, or what is going on around us. We will always be citizens of heaven. Though this process may seem simplistic when compared to the process of changing citizenship in the world, the consequences and effects are in fact much more serious and important. The reality is that this decision, this allegiance to Christ and to His Kingdom will become, must become, the foundation of our lives. All



that we do will have Him and His kingdom in mind and our desire will to please Him and bring glory to His name.

**1 Peter 1:4 (NLT)**

and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.

This change in citizen also means that the rights of a citizen of heaven also become ours. We become the heir to an inheritance from our Father, the King. No government or person on earth has authority to take these rights and this inheritance away from us.



## A Christian Follows Jesus

### John 10:27 (KJV)

“My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.”

When a shepherd has a flock of sheep the sheep would follow the shepherd whenever he went. The sheep were so in-tune to the voice of their shepherd that shepherds could come together to have fellowship allowing their flocks to intermingle. Then, once their time of fellowship was over the shepherds could each go their own way, call for their sheep and each sheep would go with their own shepherd. They knew the voice of their shepherd and they were able to recognize it from all other voices. When the voice of their shepherd called them, they came and they did what the shepherd wanted them to do.

This same obedience and understanding is what Jesus has taught us to do. He is our Shepherd and we are His sheep. Our desire and our intention should be to come to know His voice in such a way that we can differentiate it from all others. And, when we hear Him speaking to us, giving us instruction and wisdom, we should act upon and do what He has told us to do. How is this done?

As a married person, if my wife were to call me, the moment I heard her say her very first word, I would know that it was my wife calling. She would not need to tell me who it was or make any introduction. I know what her voice sounds like, I know the tone of her words, I know cadence in which she talks, there would be no doubt in my mind that this was my wife. However, when my wife and I first met and I had not heard her voice before, I would have no idea if it were her or not. This change came as a result of getting to know her. It came because I talked to her every day for hours and hours. I wanted to hear her voice, I wanted to know what she was thinking and I desired to learn everything I could about her. Through this process I learned to know her voice and I will never mistake it for anyone else.

If we wish to learn the voice of our Lord, we must spend time listening for it and seeking it. We must search for Him and search for His direction in our life. When we search and listen with a sincere and expectant heart He will begin to speak to us and we will begin to learn what His voice sounds like.





## Jesus Heard and Obeyed His Father

### **John 14:15 (NLT)**

“If you love me, obey my commands.”

If we are to be followers of Jesus we must know that the foundation of everything He did was in His obedience to His Father. Every act that He performed, every word that He said, and every place that He went was because He heard His Father’s voice and He obeyed the instructions that His Father gave to Him. There was never a time in which Jesus heard the direction of His Father and did not do it and there was never a time when He disobeyed one of the commands of the Father. In His teachings He never indicated in any way that it was ok to disregard anything that the Lord has instructed us to do.

Jesus started this obedience by spending time with His Father. As you read through the account of Jesus’s life in the New Testament you will find that Jesus regularly spent time alone with His Father. No matter what was going on around Him, what situation He was facing, or what He needed to do, He made spending time with His Father a priority.

If Jesus consistently and passionately sought to spend time with His Father, to seek His instruction and then to completely follow whatever instructions God gave to Him, should we not also seek to do these same things? Yes, we absolutely should seek to follow the example of Jesus! We should seek to spend time with Him, we should seek to read His Word, we should seek to understand His commands and most importantly of all, we should seek to not be hearers of the Word only, but to truly do the things that God has told us to do!





## Jesus Took Up His Cross

### **Matthew 16:24 (KJV)**

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

What does taking up our cross actually mean? Before we discuss what it means, let's take a moment to talk about what it does not mean. Taking up our cross is not a reference to us carrying our burdens or responsibilities. It does not mean that we are to continue to move forward and follow Christ in spite of the consequences of our sin or the responsibilities that we have in this world. It is not an indication that the path of following Jesus is going to be hard and therefore going to take work, like carrying a heavy load, in order to follow. These possibilities fail to show the true seriousness that this statement carries with it.

In the time that Jesus lived, crucifixion was something that was known and feared throughout the land. It was a means of execution and it was considered to be possibly the most traumatic and painful way that a person could be put to death. If someone heard about an individual being required to “carry their cross” there would have been no question about what was taking place, that person was on their way to be put to death. There would have been nothing inspirational about it nor would there have been any thoughts of a person “preserving through until the end of the race.”

What does this context tell us about what Jesus was talking about? Let's break down the following three statements based on the historical context that we just discussed. “Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”. When a person had been sentenced to death by crucifixion they would have no choice as to if they would go through with the execution. They were forced to proceed regardless of if they wanted to or not. However, Christ was different. At every single moment as He was being sent to the cross He had absolute power, authority and ability to stop. There was no one forcing Him to go forward and there was no one who had any power or authority above His. He denied His right to say no and instead willfully laid down upon the cross and allow Himself to be executed. When this passage instructs us that we are to deny ourselves it means that we have a similar decision to make. We do not have to accept the salvation of Christ and we do not have to obey His commands. We have a decision to make as to if we will follow Him or not. We may reject to lay ourselves down or we may choose not to.



To deny ourselves is to give up the ability that we have to choose to stand up and instead, do as the Lord has called us to do. It means that we obey what He tells us rather than our own desires and ultimately, our desire will become His desires over the course of time.

The second portion of this statements tells us that we are to take up our cross. Having first made the decision that we will not purpose our own desires but instead do the will of the Father, Jesus now reveals to us what He has called us to do. We are to lay our lives to the will of the Father, just as Jesus laid Himself down. This is a holistic commitment that we make to sacrifice all that we are for the sake of the Lord.



## A Christian “Fights the Good Fight” Daily

### **2 Timothy 4:6-7 (NIV)**

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering and the time for my departure is near. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Something that we as Christians must come to grasp is that when we refer to fighting, we can never begin to believe that we are the ones doing the fighting. A true Christian warrior is an individual who recognizes that within themselves they are capable of doing nothing. They understand that there is no weapon that they possess that can be effective in the battle they are in. Instead, they will recognize that it is only the Lord who can fight the battle. Because of this understanding and this truth, instead of standing up to fight, they will humble themselves in prayer. Instead of taking matters into their own hands, they will, by faith, relinquish complete and total control over to the hands of the Lord. As mentioned in the verse above, we must allow our lives to be poured out as a drink offering. The liquid in the container has no ability to control what is happening nor can it even try to take control. It is poured out at the will of the cupbearer. The Christian warrior recognizes the cupbearer is Christ and allows Christ to rule in every aspect of their lives. When a Christian submits this level of authority to the Lord, all authority within their lives, they are a warrior for Christ and no power, no plan, no scheme, or activity of the enemy can stop what God sends them to do.

### **Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)**

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Another lesson that each Christian must learn is that the true battle that we are engaged in, “the fight” that the Bible talks about taking place, is not one that we can see. When we think about warfare we think about the images of warfare which occur in the world. We will tend to think about the situations that are going on around us, whether they be illness, money issues, family or relationship issues, work issues, or anything else, as something that we must do something about in order to be solved. For instance, if an individual is experiencing attacks within their marriage they may begin to look at a variety



of changes they can make in their relationship or begin to look at things they can do to try to make the situation better. However, very few people will engage in the true fundamental battle that is taking place. There is a struggle in the spiritual realm in which the enemy, the Devil, is seeking to destroy the things that God has created. This includes you and me and the purpose that He has created us each with.

As Christian warriors, we must begin to see the true root of the problem, a spiritual problem and we must begin to learn to engage in this battle accordingly. But how does the Christian warrior begin to fight this battle? What has the Lord told us to do when we find ourselves on the spiritual battlefield? The Bible gives us much instruction on how to engage in this fight, but four points the Lord has led to be a part of this training are in the following four sections.



## Turns to The Lord for Help

### **Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)**

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Turning to the Lord for help. This may almost seem so simple that it should not have even been mentioned, yet I tell you the truth, very few people truly practice this within their lives. So many people will work tirelessly to fight their own battle, leaving the Lord as the final option they turn to when all their other plans seem to have failed. If there is an illness, a huge majority of people immediately consider what doctor they can go to or what medicine they can take and then if those are not effective they then turn to the Lord in desperation. I tell you, this is backwards. The very first and in fact only place we should turn to is the Lord Himself.

This can also be the beginning of idolatry. You may wonder how this could lead to idolatry? I know of many people who are on medication and upon facing a situation in which they may not have that medication anymore make statements like, “I cannot live without that medication, it saved my life!” I must say, that medication has no power or authority to grant life or death. The Bible tells us that all authority on heaven and on earth belongs to Christ. If this is true then how could a person view that medication with that much passion? The answer is that the person has ascribed undue authority to an object and that medication which God had provided has now turned into an idol. We must each examine our lives to determine if there are areas in which we do not seek first God and His help. If there are areas in which we do not seek the help of the Lord as our first course of action then we need to recognize that changes need to take place within our lives.

### **John 14:26 (NIV)**

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”



The help that is offered from the Lord is not like the help that we can find in the world. When we face a situation in this world and seek help from this world we make go to see something, make phone calls, or go through some type of process before we can begin to receive it. However, the Lord has sent His Holy Spirit to us to live within us. God is with us in every situation and He never leaves us nor forsakes us. Where others may not hear your cry for help, ignore you, or be delayed in responding, the help of the Lord is always near because He is always right beside us and His very Spirit dwells within us. We must develop the understanding of the habit to call upon the Lord immediately in all things and seek His help.



## Turns to The Lord for Strength

### **Philippians 4:13 (NIV)**

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

### **Isaiah 40:39 – 31 (NIV)**

“29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

When we engage in spiritual battles, we must always recognize that it is never within our own ability that we fight. We have authority in spiritual battles because the Spirit of the Lord is with us, but we in our own ability and strength, can do nothing. My spiritual father and mentor told me once about the difference between power/strength and authority. He said to imagine a large truck driving down the road. In front of the truck a government police officer steps out and raises their hand, signaling the truck to stop. If this happens the truck driver will recognize that the police officer has been given authority by the government and will comply with the request of the police officer to stop. The truck did not stop as a result of the police officers power or strength. If the police officer had tried to stop the truck using their own personal strength they would have been hit and crushed without any resistance. When we engage in spiritual battle we must always remember that we are just like the police officer in this scenario. Within ourselves we are entirely incapable of fighting the battle, but when we turn to Christ and His strength and claim His authority then we are equipped for the battle.

When we face the circumstances of this life, we cannot rely on our own strength and ability. We must turn to Christ and seek Him. The Bible tells us that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus and against Him there is nothing that can stand.





## Turns to the Lord for Guidance

### **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)**

“5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight.”

This could be one of the most difficult tasks that a Christian who truly seeks to follow Christ may face. The process of trusting in the Lord completely and not acting based on our understanding, knowledge or logic is at the same time very simply, yet also very hard to do for most. We may be in a situation in which the way seems very obvious and yet, the Lord asks us to do the opposite of what our logical mind tells us to do. The Bible tells us that there are ways that may seem right to us but it is the Lord that will tell us the correct way to do. We cannot see into the future and therefore when we make decisions we cannot have the full perspective of what we need to occur. Yet the Lord knows exactly what is going to happen and if we listen to Him and obey we will find that because of His complete knowledge and understanding, He can place us in positions that we could have never thought were possible. Likewise, when we hear and obey His direction He can also steer us clear of situations and circumstances that we have otherwise destroyed us.

### **John 16:13 (NIV)**

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

How do we receive this direction from the Lord? How does He communicate His desires to us? It is done through the Holy Spirit. When we accept Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives the Spirit of God, His Holy Spirit will come and live within us. This is the gift that God gives to those who believe in Him. He will come and make His dwelling within our heart and we will be able to hear Him speak to us. This will not necessarily be an audible voice that we hear, but a prompting within our heart and mind. This voice will lead us and guide us along the path and the plan that He has for our lives. All we need to do is to listen and obey.





## Does Not Look Back

### Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV)

“18 Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

### 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[a] The old has gone, the new is here!”

One of the primary tools that the enemy will use on the Christian warrior are the weapons of guilt and shame. When a person gives their lives to Christ the Bible tells us clearly that the old is gone and the new has come. We are made a new creation and the sin that once held us no longer can have any authority over us. In addition, that sin is gone, whipped away by the blood Christ. We no longer carry the weight and the guilt that we did as a result of that sin. The question we must wrestle with is this, if God has forgiven us and has given us a new life, can we and should we also forgive ourselves and allow the sin of our former lives go as well?

It sounds like it should be basic, yet so many Christians continue to punish themselves for the sin that the Lord has already forgiven them for. The enemy will constantly remind us of the shame and sin in our former lives in an attempt to make us feel as though we are not worthy of the forgiveness of the Lord or and that we are not qualified to do the work that the Lord has called us to do because of that sin. We cannot allow the enemy to use our past in that way. We cannot allow guilt to come back into our lives once we have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus.

There is only one way in which we should reflect upon our past, through testimony. When we look upon our past and tell others about the sin we were once in and do it so that we can demonstrate the redemption that we have received through Christ, this brings glory to the Lord. We do not look back and tell others because we feel guilt or shame but we do it so that they can see the love of the Father and the forgiveness that only He can bring into our lives. When we tell our testimony we do not point to the sin that had once held us captive, but to the power of the Lord to break the sin in our lives and forgive us. We do it so that others may experience the same love that we have and can be saved from the sin of the world and lies of the enemy.





## You Are Either for The Lord, Or Against Him

### **Matthew 12:30 (ESV)**

“Whoever is not with me is against me and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

Humanity has many different ethnicities and cultures and we seem to be professionals at dividing everything and everyone up into groups. However, when we look at the reality of God’s Word there is only a point of distinction that matters. You are either a follower of Christ, or you are not.

Over the past two thousand years we have, as we humans seem to always do, taken this simple distinction and truth of God’s Word and completely muddled the waters in an unbelievable way. If you were to do a search for the total number of Christian denominations in the world you would likely find estimates to be between thirty to forty thousand. While we have certainly made things more complicated than it should be, this number is not quite accurate as the vast majority of this number do not represent differences in belief, but rather different independent organizations. If we look at actual beliefs we will find that there are roughly forty different Christian denominations, or belief systems, in the world today. We are most certainly familiar with some the different names of these belief systems such as: Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Calvinist, Protestant, Catholic, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Assemblies of God, Evangelical, Church of God, Eastern Orthodox, Church of The Nazarene, Disciples of Christ, Church of The Brethren, Apostolic, Full Gospel, Fundamentalist.

### **Galatians 3:25-29 (NLT)**

26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs and God’s promise to Abraham belongs to you.

What a travesty and mockery we have made of His church! The fundamental truth is that this tangled and ugly mess is the product of human logic and reasoning. When this life is over and we stand before the throne of the Lord to give account of what we have done, not a single one of these human labels will be brought up for consideration by the judge. He will not question if you tithed to the Baptist



denomination, He will not question if you attended a Pentecostal church and He will not ask if you went through a Catholic catechism. The judge will not put all of the Evangelicals in one room and all of the Calvinists in another and judge them with different standards. No ritual, or sacrament, or decree by any of these groups will do anything to sway the Judges verdict. There will be one distinguishing factor alone that will determine the saved from the unsaved on that day. Are you a follower of Jesus?

This question is not a surface question. It is not simply asking if you know of Jesus or know about Him or who He is. The meaning of the word “know” in this context is far deeper.



## Conclusion and Closing Prayer

### **John 13:34-35 (NIV)**

“34 A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Throughout this world there are many different beliefs and there are many different doctrines about what it means to be a Christian. There are many who believe that there are different ceremonies that you go through or commitments that you make in order to be a Christian. There are some who believe that if you join a specific denomination or group then you will be a Christian. There are those who believe that if you learn enough Bible verses, you say the right words, you perform enough good deeds, then you will be a Christian. God’s Word tells us, however, that none of this is true.

A true Christian is a person who genuinely believes in Jesus with all of the heart, mind and soul. Because of this their lives are changed and they hear and obey the direction that He gives to them through the leading of the Holy Spirit. There is no more. There is no church that you can belong to, no works that you can perform and no amount of money that can buy it. We must come to know Jesus as the Lord and Savior of our lives and we must tell other people about Him and His wonderful love for each of us.

Father, as we come to the conclusion of this lesson I pray that each person will have come to know You more deeply. Lord, I pray that they will seek You and Your voice more and more and that they will not be hearers of Your Word and Your direction but that they would take action to do the things that You are leading them to do. May they each be blessed and may they each hear the calling that You have placed upon their lives and go forth to do the good work that You have called each of them to do. We give You all of the praise, the honor and the glory for all things, both now and forever. In the name of Jesus we pray these things, Amen and Amen!

