

INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

A CATHOLIC BIBLE STUDY

SUMMARY CD-I

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

We are beginning a Catholic Bible Study designed for the laity so that, as Paul says,

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may charity be the root and foundation of your life. Thus you will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself. (Eph. 3:17-19)

JESUS OF NAZARETH stood up in the Temple of Jerusalem and extended the INVITATION:

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me; let him drink who believes in me. Scripture has it: "From within him rivers of living water shall flow." (John 7:37)

We, who will believe, have a call to be disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

DISCIPLESHIP

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IS SERIOUS BUSINESS. It demands serious people. On an occasion, a great multitude came to hear Jesus. He preached to them the Parable of the Sower of Seed. All the seed was good but not all fruitful. The soil made the difference. Certain environments impede Christian discipleship. Certain living conditions fit or unfit people for the Kingdom of God. As we enroll in a School of Christian Discipleship, it is important to meditate on Jesus' interpretation of the Parable of the Seed. What is there in my daily environment that is hostile to the engrafted word of Jesus Christ? What is the ground of my being, the soil of my life?

Discipleship is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. We become a disciple of Jesus in order to become like the Master, to become His friend. St. Paul encouraged: "Put you on the Mind and Heart of Christ." Discipleship ends when we can in truth proclaim, "for to me, 'life' means Christ. . ." (Phi. 1:21)

PRAYER

To be a good disciple of Christ demands prayer. To the Christian disciples at Corinth, Paul writes:

The natural man does not accept what is taught by the Spirit of God. For him, that is

absurdity. He cannot come to know such a teaching because it must be appraised in a spiritual way. (1 Cor. 2: 14)

The Scriptures are not products of human minds but the Divine Mind. If we are to understand the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit of God must be their interpreter. Without illumination from the Holy Spirit, our minds skip over the sacred words like a rock over a frozen pond. The Mind of Jesus is the perfect interpreter of Scripture. Paul makes a bold claim: "But we have the Mind of Christ!" (1 Cor. 2:16) The Holy Spirit brings to us the Mind of Christ. This is what we read in the Sixteenth Chapter of St. John's Gospel. (John 16:12-13)

Prayer is the key that opens minds, hearts and bodies to the spiritual world. The Spirit illumines the mind and enables it to penetrate into the depths of the Word. The mind becomes like a bucket letting itself into a deep well. The promise of Jesus to the thirsty is realized--a river of living water flows within the soul.

Paul encourages:

at every opportunity pray in the Spirit, using prayers and petitions of every sort. Pray constantly and attentively for all the holy company. (Eph. 6:18)

"Draw your strength from the Lord, and His mighty power." (Eph. 6: 10) "In him who is the source of my strength, I have strength for everything." (Phil 4:13) If the study of Scripture becomes sterile, we need to ask ourselves; "Has the life gone out of our prayers to the Holy Spirit?"

REPENTANCE

All encounters with the Divine, sooner or later, demand human repentance if spiritual progress is to be made. Jesus loves us enough to insist we be, not what we are, but what we ought to be. Jesus is a patient friend but grace has its day.

"If you hear the Voice of God today, harden not your hearts." In another place the psalmists say, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart.

As disciples of Christ, we must expect to encounter Scriptures such as Colossians 3:5-9, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 and Ephesians 5:2-7. These and many others will convict us of sin. Scriptures will admonish us. Encountering such Scriptures may be a stumbling block on our path. If we listen, we may hear an echo from the ancient synagogue at Capernaum: "Do you want to leave me too?" (John 6:67)

LIVING FAITH

As disciples of Christ it is not enough to pray and study to know God and His Holy Will, we must also endeavor to live the Scriptures- -to clothe the teachings of Jesus once again with flesh

and blood. In the teachings of James, the Christian character finds its proper balance. Let us turn to the Second Chapter of his Epistle and read verses 14--26. Here we see that living faith finds expression in Christian works. It is the fuel of its life! Paul leaves no doubt in our minds that Christian Discipleship ought to change our lives:

Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another, forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Over all these virtues put on love, which bind the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ's peace must reign in your heart, since as members of one body you have been called to that peace . . .(Col. 3:12-15)

If Christian Disciples have a motto, it could well be 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks; such is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." What would prove us more spiritual?

CONCLUSION

Prayer, Study and Good Works are the essentials of Christian Discipleship. We must not grow tired of doing good. If we do not give up the race, we will win the prize. "It is important that we continue on our course, no matter what stage we have reached." (Phil. 3:16)

BLESSED IS HE WHO HEARS THE WORD OF GOD AND KEEPS IT!

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS AND QUESTIONS

CD-I

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

The primary purpose of this lesson is to MEDITATE on the requirements of CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP and how we PERSONALLY can commit ourselves to discipleship. The decision made will affect your entire study of Scripture. Seek to spend daily a half hour in the study of Scripture. You receive in proportion to what you invest.

SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK

(Please Memorize)

“MAY CHRIST DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH, AND MAY CHARITY BE THE ROOT AND FOUNDATION OF YOUR LIFE, THUS YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GRASP FULLY, WITH ALL THE HOLY ONES, THE BREADTH AND LENGTH AND HEIGHT AND DEPTH OF CHRIST’S LOVE, AND EXPERIENCE THIS LOVE WHICH SURPASSES ALL KNOWLEDGE, SO THAT YOU MAY ATTAIN TO THE FULLNESS OF GOD HIMSELF.” (Eph. 3:17-19)

FIRST DAY: Read Mark 4:1-20, The Parable of the Seed

1. What does this Parable teach the Christian Community?
2. What particular lesson does it hold for you?
3. What do you see today as an obstacle in the lives of people to the acceptance of the Word of God?
4. Personal Reflections: What is the ground of my own being?
5. What in my environment impedes the Word of God in me?
6. What will I do about it?

SECOND DAY: Read Psalm 42; John 7:37-39.

1. What is the spiritual need being expressed in Psalm 42?
2. What is the invitation being extended in John 7:37-39?
3. How can Jesus answer the spiritual need expressed in Psalm 42?
4. What do I experience to be the spiritual need of my life?

5. What does this invitation of Jesus mean to me?
6. What positive actions are needed from me to accept discipleship?

THIRD DAY: Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.

1. What lessons does Paul teach the Corinthians in these readings?
2. Why do some people fail to see the truth of the Gospel?
3. What is meant by “but we have the mind of Christ”?
4. What is my mistake when reading the Scriptures?
5. What can I do to insure a proper study of the Scriptures?

FOURTH DAY: Read Colossians 3:5-9; and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

1. What does repentance in the Gospel demand?
2. From reading Ephesians 5:3-7, what would you say is the work of man in repentance?
3. What do I discern to be God’s will for me?
4. What do I plan to do about it?

FIFTH DAY: Read Luke 11:1-13.

1. What do you think led the disciples to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray?
2. What is the importance of prayer in the study of Scriptures?
3. What do you think Paul means by praying “constantly and attentively”?
4. What can prayer do in my life?
5. What is my main difficulty in developing a prayerful spirit?

SIXTH DAY: Read James 2:14-26 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

1. What does “faith without works is dead” mean to us?

2. What does it mean to have a “living faith”?
3. What must I do to make faith more alive within myself?
4. How can I increase faith in my life?

SEVENTH DAY: Read Philippians 3:7-21.

1. What does Paul mean by verse 16?
2. What must we do to persevere in discipleship?