

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Study 1

Development

Read

John 3: 1-12; Hebrews 5: 12-14

We continue our studies in the Christian Life by considering the idea of growth. One thing I hope that you have really grasped about being a Christian is the fact that Christianity is the possession of a new kind of life. Someone has said that to be a Christian is not turning over a new leaf, but taking from Christ a new life. It is not trying in my own strength to be different, but trusting in a living Saviour who will make me different. This is so true. When the Lord Jesus met Nicodemus He was talking to a man who, no doubt, used all his own abilities to make life what he thought it should be. As a religious Jew he sought to build his character by keeping the demands of the Law. Jesus swept all such efforts aside, **“You must be born again.” (John 3: 7)** He said. Life must begin over again. So, every Christian who truly believes in the Lord Jesus Christ possesses eternal life. Think about the meaning of this very carefully. I do hope that as you continue these studies you are absolutely sure that you are a Christian in the true sense of the word.

Now the proof of reality in normal healthy life is growth. A baby is a beautiful creation and is so attractive in many ways. But if there is no growth after the stage of infancy, from being something to be admired, it becomes an object of pity and concern. This is also true of spiritual life. Paul could speak of those who were **“babes in Christ”**. They were those who had just begun their Christian life. Their ideas were simple and their understanding limited, but the vital fact was that they were Christians. But if you read **1 Corinthians 3: 1-3** you will see that there were Christians in Corinth of whom Paul complained that they were behaving as babes when they should have been showing maturity and experience. Growth was lacking. But someone may be asking - ‘how do we grow in our Christian lives?’

1. EATING

When we think of growth we are bound to think of EATING. Some of the pictures we see of people in countries where there is insufficient food tell a sad story of malnutrition. Their bodies are deformed and stunted and consequently subject to disease. But wrong KINDS of food also impair healthy development of our bodies. Spots, blemishes and deficiencies will become apparent if we are feeding on the wrong things. The Bible, God’s Word, is the Christian’s food, and just as in a physical sense we must eat the right kind of food to grow healthy and strong, so in a spiritual sense we must feed on God’s Word if we want to grow strong as Christians. For the young Christian, the Bible is a source of spiritual milk. **(1 Peter 2: 2)** While the more mature Christian can find it is also spiritual meat. **(Hebrews 5: 14)** Whatever age we are, it is wonderful to know that every day we can find the right kind of food in order to develop into healthy Christians.

Job could say of God’s Word, **“I have not departed from the commandments of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” (Job 23: 12)** The Psalmist could say, **“How sweet are Your words to my**

taste.” (Psalm 119: 103) Jeremiah declared, **“Your words were found, and I ate them; and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” (Jeremiah 15: 16)** See also **John 4: 32 & 34**. Make sure that you, too, get your daily spiritual ‘meals’.

2. EXERCISE

Again, when we think of growth we connect with it EXERCISE. For a life to grow strong, there has to be continual training in order to develop the powers and abilities that are there. Muscles grow stronger with exercise. Is this also true in the spiritual life of a Christian? It certainly is! There are exercises that need to become regular habits of Christian living. Let us look at just three:

(a) There is the exercise of PRAYER. This is vital to grow in the things of God. We need to spend time every day alone in prayer before God. Sometimes we call this the Quiet Time. It is very necessary. Prayer not only means I can hear Him speak to me, but I can speak to Him. See **Philippians 4: 6-7** and **Colossians 4: 2**.

(b) Another necessary exercise for strong spiritual life is that of STUDYING God’s Word. This is quite different to the daily quiet time, where the Christian is seeking to be quiet before the Lord, so that He can speak to His child through His Word. In Bible Study one is seeking to find out the meaning of the passage, to analyse words, chapters and books, in order to dig out the great treasure of truth that God has stored for us within the pages of this wonderful book. In **Ephesians 6: 17** the Bible is called **“The Sword of the Spirit”**. We need therefore to be able to use this **“Sword”** when we meet the attacks of Satan, who would seek to weaken us as Christians by temptations and doubts. The Apostle Paul urges Timothy in **2 Timothy 2: 15**, **“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”** Get to know your Bible!

(c) The third exercise we can profitably engage in is Scripture memorisation. There are many reasons why Christians should commit Bible portions to memory, but here are just a few:

- (i) It is a sacred investment for time and eternity. Almost every other form of learning will be quite useless in Heaven, but **“the Word of the Lord endures for ever.” (1 Peter 1: 25)**
- (ii) It is an aid to holy living. The Psalmist said, **“Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119: 11)** Remember too, how the Lord Jesus met every temptation of Satan with the words, **“it is written...”** The enemy flees when we use **the sword of the Spirit**.
- (iii) It is a means of guidance. That is what David meant when he said, **“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119: 105)** The lamp and the light show us where to place the next step. Compare also **Deuteronomy 6: 6-7**.
- (iv) It is an invaluable help when witnessing to others of the Saviour. The Word of God, which is **“living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,” (Hebrews 4: 12)** will be far more effective than any words of ours when witnessing to the unsaved.
- (v) It is a wonderful source of comfort. **(Romans 15: 4)** Often situations arise in life when we are unable to read the Bible.

If we have memorised its precious promises they will be a comfort to us in every time of need. Even if you only learn one verse a day for six days a week, and revise them on the seventh, in one year you will have learnt over 300 verses! The more ambitious could work through a chapter or even a whole book! So make sure you get your daily spiritual exercise! See also **1 Timothy 4: 7-13**:

3. ENJOYMENT

As we close this study, remember that just as a healthy, natural growth brings a sense of well-being, so healthy development in the Christian life brings ENJOYMENT. The Christian life is meant to be enjoyed. And certainly, if we are in daily communion with God, and studying His Word, laying it up in our hearts and walking in the light of it, there is no reason why our hearts should not be rejoicing. For strength in the things of God brings joy and conversely, Nehemiah could say, **“The joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8: 10)** The Apostle John, when writing to Gaius **3 John verse 2** says, **“I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.”** I wonder what OUR bodies would be like if they were only as healthy as our souls?!

Study 2

Discipleship



Matthew 4: 18-22; Romans 12: 1-2

We come to a very important study in the meaning of the life of a Christian. We noticed that this life began with decision. The decision meant acceptance of the Lord Jesus as Saviour. We emphasised that there was ‘no turning back.’ Once we have made this vital decision, we face the question, ‘How much of my life belongs to Christ? The great challenge we face in this question has to do, not so much with accepting Christ as Saviour, but acknowledging Him as LORD. It is easy, as you know, to rejoice in what He gives to us when He becomes our Saviour, but it is as easy to ignore His claims upon our lives as our Lord and Master. It has been so often said that ‘if He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all’.

Look in the Gospels at the call of some of the disciples. They were busy with their daily work when the Master called them. **“Follow Me”**, He said. There was a ready response and **“they left all to follow Him.” (Matthew 4: 18-22)** At times the way must have been very difficult. Peter did fall once as we know, by denying the Lord. Yet he never really left his Lord and eventually followed Him to martyrdom. Discipleship means learning all that the Lord has to teach and following Him absolutely, obeying Him in everything and giving Him the love of our lives. C. T. Studd, the great English cricketer and missionary to China, once said, ‘I had known about Jesus dying for me, but I never understood that if He died for me then I didn’t belong to myself. Redemption means buying back, so that if I belong to Him, either I had to be a thief and keep what wasn’t mine, or else I had to give up everything for God. When I came to see that Jesus Christ had died for ME, it didn’t seem hard to give up all for Him.’ We are going to look briefly at discipleship in three ways:

1. COMMITMENT TO THE LORD

True Christianity is an all-out commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Saviour is not looking for men and women who will give their spare evenings to Him - or their weekends, or their years of retirement. Rather He seeks those who will give Him first place in their lives. We do not think it strange that soldiers give their lives for patriotic reasons or when Communists give their lives for political reasons. It seems quite natural to us that top sportsmen and women should totally dedicate their lives to their chosen profession. But that total dedication should

characterise the life of a follower of Christ, somehow seems remote and hard to grasp. Yet the words of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels are clear enough, and there is scarcely any room for misunderstanding if we accept them at their face value. Read the gospels carefully and make a note of all the demands He makes of those who would be His disciples.

Two things stand out very clearly. The first is that the motivation for discipleship must be a supreme love for Jesus Christ - a love that transcends all other loves, **Luke 14: 26**, even to the denial of self. For self-love is one of the greatest hindrances to discipleship! Secondly, there must be absolute obedience to the claims of Christ and to His revealed will. **“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word”**, said Jesus in **John 14: 23**. And again, **“Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6: 46)**. To call Jesus, **“Lord”**, and then not obey Him, is a pure contradiction in terms.

Each progressive step in the Christian life is a step of obedience to His word. One of the first steps a Christian should think of taking is that of Believer’s Baptism. You will see from such passages as **Acts 2: 41-42** and **Acts 8: 36-38** that early Christians were baptised as a personal testimony to the fact that they were followers of Christ, and this is still practiced today. It was in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus in **Matthew 28: 19-20**, and notice the order is - make disciples, then baptise. At every point of growth in Christian experience, such demands for obedience will be found, and each act of obedience is a proof of our commitment to Jesus as Lord.

2. COUNTING THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Christians must count the cost of discipleship. It is not easy to be a Christian. The Lord Jesus never tried to coax men into a glib profession of faith. Neither did He seek to attract a large following by preaching a popular message. He also warned those who would follow Him that they should first count the cost. **(Luke 14: 28-33)** Although it costs nothing to become a Christian, it costs everything to BE one. It is not popularity but persecution; not comfort but a cross. A critical world is watching. It may outwardly sneer and scoff, yet inwardly it has a deep respect for the man or a woman who abandons himself to Christ. But when it sees a half-hearted, lukewarm Christian, it has nothing but contempt. ‘This man began to build, and was not able to finish’, it mocks. ‘He started off with a great noise, but he’s going out with a whimper.’

And so the Saviour said, You had better **“count the cost.”** It is not exaggeration to liken the Christian life to a war. There are three fierce enemies - the world, the flesh and the devil. There are discouragements and sufferings. There are toils and testings. The Lord Jesus warned His hearers against any impulsive decisions to be His disciples. He could promise them persecution, tribulation and distress. But He also knew that there would be open hearts, young and old, who would bow to His claims. Those who would want to glorify God by a life that was utterly poured out for Him. So He left the door open! **“He who has ears to hear, let him hear”.** **(Luke 14: 35)** Those who hear are the ones who count the cost and will say:

*“I have decided to follow Jesus,
Tho’ none go with me still I will follow
The world behind me, the Cross before me,
No turning back, no turning back.”*

3. FOLLOWING THE COURSE OF DISCIPLESHIP

A Christian must follow the course of discipleship right through to the end. It is wonderful to have a good start to our Christian lives. What about the end? See what the Apostle Paul could say in **2 Timothy 4: 7-8**. We go back to our question at the beginning of the lesson. How much of our lives, belong to Christ? There is one answer, and only one - He must have all. The cost must be ‘everything’ - all a man has and is. It meant this for the Saviour. It cannot mean less for those who would follow Him.

Let us look at **1 Corinthians 6: 19-20**. Here Paul says that our bodies are the temples - the dwelling places of the Holy Spirit and we are not our own, we have been bought with a price. How tremendous that is! The Lord Jesus gave Himself for us at the cross that He might make us absolutely HIS. Nothing less than unconditional surrender could ever be a fitting response to His sacrifice at Calvary. Love so amazing, so divine, could never be satisfied with less than our souls, our lives, our all.

A life that is abandoned to the Lord Jesus has its own deep reward. It is the best life for you if you serve the best Master. Your wages are good, and you like your work even better than your wages. Your rewards are wonderful, both now and in eternity. The Saviour said over and over again, **"He that loses his life for My sake will find it"**. A life that is lived for self is a life lost. But a life poured out for Him is a life found, saved, enjoyed and kept for all eternity. It is the most spiritually satisfying life in this world, and the most rewarded in the life to come. See **Matthew 16: 25-27** and **Revelation 22: 12**.

Study 3

Declaration

Read

Luke 8: 26-39; Romans 1: 14-16

There are so many features that we could outline concerning the life of a Christian. Some of these we have covered. We can say that every feature we study shows what a wonderful life it is. Life in Christ brings many blessings to the Christian himself; peace, joy, love and a sense of purpose and direction. But there is also the power of the Holy Spirit within him giving reality and effectiveness, not only in his own life, but in its influence over others.

We are going to look at the subject of testimony in this study. As Christians we should be telling others of what Christ means to us. Why should we keep these good things to ourselves? Winning souls to the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the greatest occupations in the world today. **Proverbs 11: 30**, says, **"He who wins souls is wise."**

Let us first look at the experience of the demon-possessed man in **Luke 8**. Here is a man who met the Lord Jesus. He was absolutely under the control of Satan. He was a menace to himself and everyone else. The demons in him defied the Lord Jesus Christ. But we see the majesty of the Lord as He commanded the demons to come out of the poor man. He was immediately set free. How wonderful to see him **"sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind"**. (**verse 35**) The people gathered round and as they saw it they were amazed. The changed man wanted to stay with the Lord, but what did Jesus say to him **"return to your own house and tell what great things God has done for you."** (**Luke 8: 39**) To the Lord Jesus it was important that this man, who had known His power, should make his experience known, beginning at home. We can ask three simple questions about a Christian and his testimony for Christ.

1. WHY should a Christian tell others?

The Lord Jesus gave to the man he had delivered, the mission to spread abroad His power, so He appoints every Christian to the task of witnessing for Him. **Acts 1: 8** makes this very clear, **"You shall be witnesses to Me"**. Every disciple is a witness because Christ has saved him and sent him. And, surely, if we have found Christ for ourselves we are best able to tell others what He means to us. The only way the early Church grew so rapidly was because those who knew Christ to be the living Saviour were willing, at all costs, to tell everyone everywhere about Him.

2. WHAT should a Christian tell others?

We can only tell others what we know ourselves. Remember this: our witness must spring from personal experience. **"We speak what we know and testify what we have seen."** (**John 3: 11**) Paul was very certain of the gospel that he preached. He felt compelled to preach it. (**1 Corinthians 9: 16**) He was not ashamed of it because he had proved its power. (**Romans 1: 16**) I am sure that he felt convinced that the Lord Jesus, his personal Saviour, was the only Saviour of men. At school, in college, in the office, in the home with non Christian relatives, in the factory, everywhere, there are those who need the saving power of Christ in their lives. It is the responsibility of the Christian to tell others what he knows Christ to be and of what Christ has done personally for him. It is therefore good to start the day by asking God to lead us to those whom He wants us to contact that day. If we let the Lord lead us we will work more efficiently and reap more fruit for Him.

3. HOW should a Christian tell others?

The answer to this question is, of course, by every means possible. Remember that it is not only what we say that makes our testimony - what we ARE is so very important.

It is of prime importance that you yourself are spiritually healthy. You should be daily feeding on God's Word, spending time in prayer, and be constantly yielded to God. Any known sin must be confessed and abandoned, by this walking in the Spirit, you will find that the Lord will provide opportunities for effectual witness. Then during the day seize those opportunities that arise, to speak for Christ.

The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, **"You are the SALT of the earth."** (**Matthew 5: 13**) By this He meant that they were in themselves a purifying influence in the world. Their lives could be effective in spreading the worthwhile values that the Lord Jesus could give to men. Jesus also said, **"You are the LIGHT of the world . . . let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven."** (**Matthew 5: 14-16**) So we can let others know by the life we live, as well as by the words we speak, that the Lord Jesus is the Saviour of all who will trust Him.

When witnessing for Christ, quote the Word of God as much as possible - this is where your Scripture memorisation is invaluable - it is the living Word! (**Hebrews 4: 12**) It has power to reach souls far beyond any words we could ever utter. How important that every Christian should be an effective witness for the Lord to whom He belongs.

If you find it difficult to speak to others about the Lord, tell the Lord about it and ask Him to give you strength and courage to witness for Him. If you REALLY want it, He will give it. The rewards of soul-winning are tremendous. There is no thrill like the joy of winning someone else for Christ. How much greater will be your joy in Heaven when you see someone who is there because of your faithful witness. See **1 Thessalonians 2: 19** & **Matthew 10: 32**.

Study 4

Destiny

Read

John 14: 1-6;
1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

The Christian life is a life with a future. By this we mean the kind of life that has hope and certainty in it. We live in a world without hope. For many people, both young and old, to think of the future fills them with dread or a sense of emptiness. I wonder if you have thought very seriously about Christian living in relation to the future. You know where that life began, you know perhaps quite a lot about its course and nature, but what

about its climax? The sad feature about a life without Christ is that as far as that person knows, death ends it all, and then afterwards there is a dark, dread sphere of uncertainty.

Notice what the Bible says about us before we became Christians. **Ephesians 2: 1-13** is interesting in this connection. It says we were **“dead in trespasses and sins.”** (verse 1) We were **“by nature, children of wrath, just as others.”** (verse 3) It tells us that we were **“having no hope and without God in the world.”** (verse 12) A terrible state to be in! In **Hebrews 9: 27** it says that **“it is appointed for man to die once, but after this the judgment”**. It is good to know that when I become a Christian, Christ not only changes my past and present life, but in a very positive way He changes the outlook for the future.

Remember, the Lord Jesus Christ is a LIVING Saviour. Make sure that this is a definite fact in your mind. If we take this away from the Christian faith, it is meaningless. The whole value of Christian living is impaired if Jesus is not alive, and He said, **“Because I live, you will live also.”** (**John 14: 19**) Let us look at the destiny of a Christian in the following ways:

1. NO JUDGMENT.

Although sin dishonours God in such a dreadful way, Christians will never be judged for their sins. **Revelation 20: 11-14** tells of the final judgment of those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ. No Christian will ever be there. It is tremendous to realise that a Christian can face the future without fear of judgment for his sin. **John 5: 24** makes this very clear. To those who are in Christ there is no condemnation. (**Romans 8: 1**) Look carefully at these verses. It should make you realise how serious was the work which the Lord Jesus Christ did at Calvary, **“He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”** (**1 Peter 2: 24**) Because of this we are free. This makes believing in the Lord Jesus the foundation for peace and joy.

Although as Christians, we are free from the final judgment of sin, this does not give us liberty to live as we please. If a child of God wanders away from his Father, he can expect to be corrected. (**Hebrews 12: 6-7**) But clearly there is a big difference between God the JUDGE, dealing with a sinner, and God the FATHER, dealing with an erring child. In the former case, the penalty for sin is death and hell. In the latter case, the result of sin is broken fellowship. (**1 John 2: 1-2**)

2. NO DISAPPOINTMENT.

Many people put confidence in those things which only bring disappointment. It's possible to hope for much and realise very little. In **John 14: 1-6** we see how the Lord Jesus gave to His followers the promises of good things to come. He told them of many dwelling places in His Father's House. Because He was going away, He wanted to share with them the secrets of all that was to be theirs in a coming day. He promised them that He was coming again to take them to Himself. Are these promises worth trusting today? They certainly are! Learn this, that whatever we trust Christ for will never prove to be disappointing. His promises are true. (**2 Corinthians 1: 20**) The destiny of the Christian is Heaven where all the promises of Christ will be fulfilled. This will be better than we can ever imagine. Look at **1 Peter 1: 3-9** - this a wonderful passage.

3. NO FAILURE.

Are you afraid that God will fail us - that Satan will triumph? You need not be! There are many New Testament Scriptures which tell us very clearly that the Lord Jesus is, and always will be, a triumphant Saviour. For Christians, death is defeated. (Look up **1 Corinthians 15: 24-26**) For them Jesus is coming again to take them to be with Himself. (**1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17**) This means we shall reign with Him in glory forever.

(**Revelation 5: 9-10**) The decision to trust Christ for Salvation is to commence a journey in life - a life of discipleship which is bound to lead to a glorious destiny.

Questions

Study 1 DEVELOPMENT

1. In **1 Corinthians 3: 1-3** Paul accuses the Corinthians of being **“babes”**. What did he mean by this?
2. a) Where should the Christian go to find his spiritual food?
b) What two references to spiritual food are found in the New Testament?
3. Why is the 'exercise' of prayer vital in a Christian's life?
4. Why does the Christian need to regularly study the Bible?
5. Give two reasons why Christians should engage in Scripture memorisation.

Study 2 DISCIPLESHIP

1. What is the significance of the fact that we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ?
2. What are the two basic requirements for an all-out commitment to Jesus Christ?
3. According to the New Testament who should be baptised and why?
4. Why did Jesus warn those who would follow Him, that they should first count the cost?
5. What did Jesus mean when He said, **“He that loses his life for My sake will find it”**?

Study 3 DECLARATION

1. Give two reasons why a Christian should witness to others about Christ.
2. What should we do daily if we are to be effective witnesses?
3. What is the most important thing necessary before we can witness to others?
4. In what two ways can we witness to others?
5. How can we overcome difficulties in witnessing?

Study 4 DESTINY

1. What is the state and future outlook of those who do not know Christ?
2. What briefly do you think Paul is saying in the reference to **Romans 8**?
3. What is the future prospect for the Christian?
4. What have you found most challenging in this set of lessons?
5. What changes, if any, are you determined to make in your life?