



“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Cross Bearers

CrossBearers:

A Study Series for the New Disciple

Portfolio of Studies:

The Basis: Relationship with God

- Prayer: Speaking to God
- Bible Study: Listening to God
- Faith, Works, and Grace: The Balance

The Church: The Body of Christ

- Relationships in the Body
- The New Testament Church: Three Aspects
- Being Discipled: God's Plan

The Work: Becoming Like Christ

- Hindrance: The Heart
- Laziness, Idleness, Discipline
- Evangelism, Boldness and Tact
- Service with a Smile

Other Needs: Following God's Way

- Academics: Obstacle or Opportunity
- Christian Marriage: Cord of Three Strands
- The Christian Family: Parents and Children

Studies Chosen for maturity into a CrossBearer:

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1 Prayer: Speaking to God

What could be more natural for two people who love each other than to communicate? Surely one would expect to see an enormous amount of communication between a man and the God he loves with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. And yet this is all too often very different from what we observe. Communication of this sort is not natural; it must be learned. There are many hindrances—all of which Satan will gladly use in his campaign to keep us off of our knees. Yet they can all be overcome if we are willing to rely on God and give prayer the priority it deserves.

Priority

- Mark 1:35—Jesus, a busy man, found time to pray.
- He found a place free from distraction.
- He found a time free from distraction.
- Suggested—Psalm 42:1, 63:1, Luke 6:12, Hebrews 5:7

Learning Process

- Luke 11:1-13—it is not natural; even Jesus apostles had to be taught.
- Develop structure in your prayer life.

Hindrances

- 1 Peter 4:7—lack of concentration—you may wish to pray aloud.
- Psalm 66:18—lack of personal righteousness
- Luke 18:1-8—lack of persistence
- 1 John 5:14—prayer contrary to God's will
- Mark 11:24—lack of faith
- Suggested—Matthew 6:5, John 9:31, 14: 13-14, Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 4:2-4, James 5:16-17

Conclusion

- Philippians 4:6-7—cast your worries upon God.
- Jeremiah 30:2 lb—God is looking for people who will devote themselves to be close to him. Take up the challenge!
- Psalm 5:3—have a daily prayer time.
- Suggested—1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Peter 5:7, 1 John 5:14

Practicals

- Set a time and length to pray every day.
- Write out a prayer list.

Fasting

- Often associated with prayer in the Bible.
- Matthew 6:17-18 shows that fasting is expected of Christians.
- Suggested—Nehemiah 1:4, Isaiah 58, Joel 2:12, Acts 14:23

2 Bible Study: Listening to God

Assisting young Christians to become rooted in consistent and productive personal Bible study is one of the top priorities of those discipling them to Christ. Only in this way will we be able to take our stand against Satan and his schemes, wielding ‘the sword of the Spirit’ (Ephesians 6:17-18). Abiding in the word of Christ as individuals and as churches is the surest safeguard for the unity of the movement. While not fostering independence of spirit, let us carefully call each man and woman in Christ to an independent and discerning study of the word of God. Let us listen to God’s voice.

Introduction

Matthew 4:4—“every word”: Comparable to physical bread, therefore essential. If you do not stay in the Word, you will not stay in the faith.

Work at Your Bible Study

- 2 Peter 3:15-16—possible to distort Scriptures to our own destruction. There is tremendous responsibility on us personally to stick with the truth.
- 2 Corinthians 1:13—yes, some passages are difficult to understand—but not impossible! Strive to comprehend them yourself before asking others what they mean.
- 2 Timothy 2:15—becoming a well-equipped workman (3:17), not being ashamed, developing competence in studying with people.
- 1 Peter 3:15—equipped for evangelism: not just Bible knowledge, but being able to answer questions, help others, maintain gentleness and respect.
- James 1:22-25—useless to study the Bible without making the applications to our lives.
- Suggested—Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2-3, 119 (entire), Ezra 7:10, Isaiah 66:2b, Matthew 24:35, Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:7

Practicals

- Acts 17:11, Deuteronomy 17:18-20—have a set time to study your Bible daily.
- Write down convicting points from your study and pray about them.
- Do well in church classes and teaching programs.
- If you are reading the Bible for the first time, do not try to read straight through. Focus on the New Testament until you are quite familiar with it, then venture out into the Old Testament.

3 Faith, Works and Grace: The Balance

One of the greatest tragedies in the church today is that new Christians are taught to depend on self, to struggle up the road of salvation by works. This attitude may be created before he or she is baptized, in the Bible study setting. But more often this is an acquired deficiency, learned through observation of “older” Christians. Such an orientation undoes the work of the cross. Equally sad, however, is the school of thought that prides itself on having arrived at a true understanding of grace, only to condone and even encourage lukewarm commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly we must strike the balance—hence this study.

Faith

- Hebrews 11:6—we need faith to please God, but what is faith?
- James 2:14-16—faith is more than intellectual belief—it results in action. Compare James 2:20-24 with Genesis 22. Note the interrelationship between faith and obedience. Obedience is the inescapable fruit of true faith.

Works

- Ephesians 2:8-10—the Bible clearly teaches that we are not saved by our own effort, but this does not mean that God does not expect anything from us.
- 2 Kings 5:1-15—it is an unearned gift, but it is conditional on obedience.

Grace

- Definitions: *Justice*—“getting what I deserve;” *Mercy*— “not getting what I deserve;” *Grace*— “getting what I don’t deserve.”
- Titus 3:5—we are saved, not because of our righteous deeds, but by his mercy.
- Jude 4—grace is unmerited favor or mercy. But the fact that we do not earn or deserve it does not mean that we can do as we like.
- 1 Corinthians 15:10—grace will have its effect.
- Titus 2:11-14—it is because of grace that we strive to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.

4 Relationships in the Body

When one enters the community of the redeemed, relationships are radically transformed! Instead of having ourselves as the center of our focus, we are to ‘consider others better than ourselves’ (Philippians 2:3). However, implementation of these Biblical principles will never occur as long as we retain a denominational concept of fellowship and the body. Church is not something we attend; it is an opportunity to tend to needs. And there are many needs to be tended to! If young Christians are not grafted into the body in a functional way, they will most likely be reclaimed by the world. And if that is what is happening in our ministries, we are failing (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). The most crucial time for integrating the young convert into the local congregation is the first few weeks—and even days.

- ***Why are kingdom relationships different?***
 - John 13:34-35—Jesus commanded us to love each other as he has loved us. This quality of love is what makes us distinct as Christians.
 - Mark 3:35—we are Jesus’ brothers and sisters if we do God’s will. Because of this common purpose, Christian relationships transcend even blood relations.
- ***How are they different?***
 - 1 Peter 1:22—our love for each other must be sincere and from the heart.
 - 1 John 3:16—Jesus is our example. Our love for others can be measured by how much we are willing to sacrifice for them.
- ***What does this mean in practice?***
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:12—different people have different needs.
 - 1 John 3:17—look after each other’s material needs.
 - Colossians 1:28—let’s be concerned about each other’s spiritual well being.

Conclusion

- Ephesians 4:29—be edifying.
- Philippians 2:3-4—be submissive not only to leaders (Hebrews 13:17), but also to each other.
- Suggested—Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Hebrews 10:24-25, 13:1-2, James 1:19, 3 John 5.

Practicals

- Make it a point to phone other disciples.
- Hebrews 3:12-14—spend time with other Christians in order to build relationships.
- Pray for each other daily.
- Introduce yourself to at least one new person in each service for the next month.
- Write notes and cards to your brothers and sisters. Write also to leaders in your congregation to encourage them.

5 The New Testament Church: Three Aspects

We demand book, chapter and verse for all our doctrines and practices— and rightly so. Hearing our restoration pleas, how does a young Christian respond when he sees many practices he may never before have seen in his life? He is not used to *weekly* communion, and certainly not to *sacrificial* contributing. And what about the strange custom of “going forward”? This study provides scriptural explanation for these three practices in the New Testament Church.

Communion (Lord’s Supper, Eucharist)

- Matthew 26:26-29—Passover supper (Jewish background). Bread is the body of Christ; wine is his blood.
- 1 Corinthians 11: 23ff—Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. It is a proclamation of the Lord’s death until he comes. Examine yourself before eating.
- Acts 20:7—Christians came together in order to break bread.
- It appears from the evidence of the New Testament and that of early church history that the Christians broke bread together at least once a week.
- Suggested—Exodus 12 (historical background), Mark 14:12-26 Luke 22:7-20, Acts 2:42.

Contribution (for Needs of the Church)

- Matthew 6:21—your treasure is where your heart is.
- Matthew 6:24—you cannot serve both God and money, so make sure that God is first.
- Proverbs 3:9-10—are you honoring God with your money? Give him the “first fruits” of your income. Be responsible when you are away; leave your contribution behind (the church needs it).
- 1 Corinthians 16:1-2—taking up a collection to meet the needs of the poor is Biblical. 2 Corinthians 8:1-15—advance planning is best.
- 2 Corinthians 9:6ff—this is good material on sacrificial giving.
- Suggested—Exodus 36:6-7, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 6:38, 1 Timothy 6:5-10, 17

Confession of Sin (e.g. ‘Coming Forward’)

- James 5:16—public confession. No private “confessional” in the Bible. Ask spiritual people to pray for you. Their prayers will be effective.
- Proverbs 28:13—you will not prosper if you keep sins inside.
- 1 John 1:5-10 – fellowship must always be in the light (open about sin) vs. dark (conceal).

6 Being Discipled: God's Plan

Although you will not find a doctrine of “discipling partners” explicitly spelled out in the New Testament, it is indisputable that the Scriptures teach the necessity of discipling. The importance of ongoing discipleship should be clear to someone before baptism. This study aims to cultivate an attitude of openness on the part of the young Christian to discipling, as well as to remind him that, in the final analysis, it is the responsibility of the one who has confessed Jesus as Lord to persevere in his Christian growth. Discipleship is not a human expedient; it is a command of God (Matthew 28:19).

Levels of Discipling

- Hebrews 3:12—others disciple us.
- Hebrews 4:12—the Word disciplines us.
- Hebrews 5:11-14—we disciple ourselves.
- Hebrews 6:12—the Lord, through circumstances requiring patience, disciplines us too.

Being Discipled

- 2 Timothy 2:2—discipling process: a chain reaction.
- Colossians 1:28-2:1—the goal is maturity / completeness / perfection. There will be difficulties in any discipling relationship, but try to realize that the challenges you receive are made in love. Discipling is hard work.
- 1 Corinthians 11:1—follow the good example of the one discipling you. He or she is not perfect, so follow only insofar as he or she is following Christ.
- Proverbs 10:17—attitude of openness to correction. If you have the wrong attitude, you will lead others astray.
- Proverbs 11:14—ask for advice,
- Proverbs 12:15 and 15:12—cherish challenge and initiate with the one discipling you.
- Luke 6:39-40—end result: becoming like your teacher, making his good points part of your own life and character.

Discipling Yourself

- Hebrews 5:11-14—do not be slow to learn. By constant use (habit), train yourself. Ultimately, you are the one responsible for how you do spiritually. You cannot blame your failings on others.

Practicals

- Arrange a regular time to meet together each week.
- Strive for daily contact.
- Read Gordon Ferguson's *Discipling: God's Plan to Train and Transform His People*¹

7 Hindrance: The Heart

The Bible speaks of the heart as the governing center of the whole man—intellectual, physical and psychological. Thus, a man's heart makes him what he is and gives rise to all his thoughts and actions. It is imperative that a young disciple be taught to guard his heart, to keep it sensitive and open to God's word.

Introduction

- 1 Samuel 16:7—God looks at the heart.

Problems of the Heart

- Jeremiah 17:9—deceitfulness: in the sense of feelings and impulses. Deceitful with regard to discerning the truth, or what is best.
- Mark 7:21—sinfulness: the heart is the source of sin and evil desires.
- Hebrews 3:12—hardening: hearts can become hard, become unbelieving (doubtful) and turn away from God.

The Remedy

- Jeremiah 29:13—seek God with all our hearts. This verse is not just for non-Christians!
- Psalm 51: 17—cultivate a penitent, contrite heart that responds quickly to God's word.
- Psalm 119:11—hide God's word in our hearts.
- Proverbs 3:5-6—trust in the Lord with all our hearts.

Conclusion

- Proverbs 4:23—above all else, guard your heart! It is the source of our spiritual life.
- Suggested—Genesis 6:5, 2 Chronicles 16:9, Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 14:12, 28:26, Ezekiel 18:31, 1 John 3:20

Practicals

- Pray for a pure heart.
- Confess sin; be humble.
- Write out Bible verses that pertain to your heart.

8 Laziness, Idleness, Discipline

How many of us have had great dreams for how God was going to use us—how he would mold us into what he wanted us to be? Yet when the going got rough and the process became painful, we resisted—perhaps even took a couple of steps backward! Few of us are naturally disciplined; discipline must be learned. And yet without it, how do we suppose that we will take the –gospel into all the world? Surely this is fantasy! Discipline, therefore, must be built into our Christian lives from the earliest possible moment.

Introduction

- 1 Timothy 4:7—train yourself to be godly. Physical training (e.g. sports) is of limited value, but spiritual training is immeasurably valuable. The Christian life is a process of training in righteousness.

Laziness

- Hebrews 6:12—do not become lazy. Laziness is a constant threat to the life of every Christian, young or old. Imitate those who are patient, faithful and disciplined. Look for good examples; learn from them. Realize laziness is a sin!
- Suggested—Proverbs 12:1, 24:30-34, 26:13-16

Idleness

- 1 Thessalonians 4:1 1ff—be constructive members of society and of the church. Hard-working people win the respect of others.
- Try not to be dependent on anybody. Do not go into or remain in debt.
- 2 Thessalonians 3:3ff—follow the example of disciplined people. Do not be a “busybody”—appearing busy, but not really achieving anything.

Discipline

- Hebrews 12:11-12—no discipline seems pleasant, but it yields a more satisfying life. Make your life count!
- Suggested—1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 2 Timothy 2:4-6, Hebrews 5:14

Practicals

- Make a timetable of how you use your time. Get suggestions.
- Set goals.
- Spend time with a disciplined person and learn from him or her.
- If you are not a punctual person, make an effort to be early.
- Suggested: *The Disciplined Life*² by Richard Taylor and *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*³ by Stephen Covey.

9 Evangelism, Boldness, Tact

When it comes to evangelism, few young Christians possess both boldness and tact. People usually go to one extreme or the other: so tactful that they say little, if anything, or so bold that tact is thrown to the wind. Boldness comes through prayer, and tact is developed through observation of those who are diplomatic. In view of the crippling effect of fear on new Christians—and old—and considering the number of errors in judgment that are made by all, we need a separate lesson on this important subject.

Evangelism

- 2 Corinthians 5:10-21—because we know and fear God, we try to persuade others. We are Christ’s ambassadors and God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. It is not an option.
- Acts 8:1, 4—the early Christians were evangelistic—not just the leaders!

Boldness

- Romans 1:16-17—the gospel is nothing to be ashamed of because it has the power to save.
- Luke 9:23-26—if we are ashamed of Jesus and his words, he will be ashamed of us.
- Acts 4:29-31—pray for boldness! God will answer your prayers.

Tact

- Matthew 10:16—need to be wise and shrewd in our evangelism.
- Negatives:
 - Proverbs 12:18—reckless words
 - Proverbs 25:17—too frequent contact
 - Proverbs 27:14—coming on too strong
- Positives:
 - 1 Corinthians 9:20-23—accommodate yourself to your hearer.
 - Titus 2:10—make the gospel attractive.
 - 1 Peter 3:15-16—show gentleness and respect.
- Suggested—Matthew 7:6, 2 Timothy 2:23-26

Practicals

- Push yourself to be friendly and to start conversations wherever you go. The Lord will use this,
- Set a personal goal for guests at upcoming services.
- Work on improving one area of your life in order to make the gospel more attractive.
- Go evangelizing with someone.

10 Service with a Smile

When Jesus came to the earth, he came as a servant (Mark 10:45). And he is still a servant, since he always lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25). In following the Master, this is one area that we dare not play down, no matter how unglamorous it may seem. For, as Jesus taught us, the road up is the road down.

Heart of a Servant

- Matthew 20:26-28—the way up is the way of service, opposite the way of the world. Jesus came to serve, not to be served.
- Philippians 2:3-8—do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Consider others better than yourselves—then you will look to see others' needs met. For Jesus to come to earth was the supreme act of self-humiliation. We need to imitate this selfless example in our everyday lives.
- Luke 17:7-10—when we have served, our attitude should be that we have only done our duty. No complaining (Philippians 2:14); no expectation of reward.
- Colossians 3:23-24—serve with all your heart! Realize that you are serving the Lord Christ, not men.
- Suggested—Psalm 100:2, Proverbs 3:27-28, John 13:1-17, Galatians 6:2, 6:10, Ephesians 6:7-8, Philippians 4:4-5

Practicals

- Learn to serve without being asked. Look for needs.
- When asked to help in a particular way (children's ministry, ushering, communion, teaching, clean-up, office duty or food preparation), be responsible!

11 Academics: Obstacle or Opportunity?

God certainly expects excellence of Christian students: if not excellent results, at least excellent effort. Too often undisciplined students become Christians and then use evangelism or “the church” as an excuse for mediocre performance. We must help our students to see that academics are a God-given responsibility. There is nothing unspiritual about studies. The unspiritual course to take is to neglect academics. Without perseverance the student suffers great loss in character, discipline, confidence, and credibility—not to mention future prospects.

Clear Commission

- 2 Corinthians 5:18-20—God called us to be Christians as students for a reason! We have a responsibility to glorify God in academics and evangelism.
- Colossians 3:22-23—*attitude* is more important than *aptitude*. Academics are a vital part of a student’s spiritual life. To have consistent motivation, work for God, not for self.

Evangelistic Example

- 1 Thessalonians 4:11—a consistent example has an impact! Classmates will be drawn to those who can help others.
- Mark 7:37—people were amazed by Jesus’ all-around excellence. You will amaze family and friends if you excel in all areas. Conduct your ministry *through* academics, not *in spite* of academics.

Powerful Preparation

- James 1:2-4—persevering with academics leads to spiritual maturity: discipline, focus and faith.
- Suggested—Proverbs 6:6, 18:9, Philippians 2:14-16, 1 Timothy 3:7, 4:15-16

Practicals

- Seek discipling in your academics.
- Get input from professors, lecturers and classmates.
- Attend every lecture. This is important for your example.
- Take good notes and catch up on missed lectures.
- Go through homework within a day of receiving it, and plan how you will get it done.
- Keep current at all times (for conscience’s sake, as well as for practical reasons)!
- Aim to sleep reasonably, especially during exams.

12 Christian Marriage: Cord of Three Strands

God's word and power provide us with everything we need for happy, godly, fulfilling lives in every area (2 Timothy 3:17, 2 Peter 1:3, John 10:10). The area of marriage is crucial, and if a marriage is not going well, serious spiritual problems will also be present. Marriage is a vital area for discipling. Indeed, Christian marriage is one arena in which disciples will dramatically outshine the many worldly examples surrounding them. A great marriage draws others to Jesus!

God's Plan

- Genesis 2:24, Proverbs 18:22—marriage meets our deepest needs. Your husband or wife should be your closest friend.
- 1 Corinthians 7:39—marry a Christian!
- Matthew 19:9—marriage is for life.
- Proverbs 15:22—take advice.

Worldly Versus Spiritual Marriages

- Communication
 - Time together: meals, discipling, unscheduled time.
 - Listening—especially needful for husbands.
 - Express feelings; do not suppress them.
 - Colossians 3:13—no festering resentments.
 - Coordinate your schedules; do not leave each other in the dark about plans.
 - Communication may intensify conflict; expect it, do not avoid it!
 - Selfishness
- Harsh husbands? Colossians 3:19, 1 Peter 3:7—husbands must serve their wives, being considerate. Husbands should do their share of the housework, cleaning, taking care of the children...
- Bossy or nagging wives? Proverbs 21:19,25:24, 27:15, Colossians 3:18, 1 Peter 3:5-6—wives must learn submission.
- Weak or henpecked husbands? Ephesians 5:22-33—the man must be the spiritual leader in the relationship.
 - Hospitality
 - Is homelife centered only around each other—life in a cozy, selfish, private world?
 - 1 Peter 4:9—hospitality is God's will. Open your home to others.
 - Use hospitality in evangelism.
 - 1 Timothy 3:4—this is the husband's responsibility even more than the wife's!
 - Proverbs 24:30-34—an untidy home is not inviting.
 - Spirituality
 - Talk about spiritual things when you are together.
 - Pray with your spouse daily.
 - Acts 5:1-11—do not “protect” each other when there is lukewarmness or compromise; Ephesians 4:15—speak the truth in love.
 - Romance
 - 1 Corinthians 7:5—do not deprive one another.
 - Remember the special touches: cards, flowers, presents, surprises....
 - Input
 - Is either one of you closed to input? Are there festering problems?
 - Every marriage needs counseling; no one is above it.
 - Marriages need discipling. “Four-way openness”: husbands and wives

having permission from each other to speak to the other's discipler if there are unresolved problems. This is a powerful safeguard and a good test of sincerity.

Practicals (Lesson 12 Christian Marriage)

- Pray together every day!
- Share your faith together.
- Share quiet times from time to time.
- Work on the church classes together. Expect the best of each other!
- Spend an evening each week alone together, showing your love for each other and really communicating.
- Read and discuss 1 Corinthians 13.
- Read Song of Songs to one another, husband reading the part of the "Lover" and wife the part of the "Beloved."
- Pray daily that you will be able to study with another couple together.
- Have frequent double dates.
- Discuss your schedules together.
- Plan an overnight trip together—without the children.
- Read Sam and Geri Laing's *Friends and Lovers*.⁴

13 The Christian Family: Parents and Children

The family is the most basic unit of society. To understand the desperate plight our society is in, you need only to look at the desperate straits the average family is in! In stark contrast to families in the world—with their narrow outlook, poor communication, brewing resentments, undisciplined children and decaying marriages—the Christ-centered family is a breath of fresh air and a ray of hope.

The family following God’s word is a happy, communicative, warm, loving, committed and fruitful family. Just as Christian marriage is God’s wise plan for men and women to love and live together, so the Christian family is God’s answer to the ungodliness and selfishness of society. Family is the forum he has chosen for character development in his most precious gift to parents: their children.

Spiritual Focus

- Chain of command: Christ—husband—wife—children.
- If you want a great family life, you need discipling!
- Aim to have an evangelistically fruitful family.

Bringing Up Children

- Security and happiness:
 1. Time—you will need to reorder your priorities!
 2. Affection—without it, they will become insecure, cold, introverted and awkward around strangers. Spiritual examples (parents)—Ephesians 6:4, Deuteronomy 6:7
 - Discipline:
 1. Proverbs 23:13-14—it is unloving not to give it. Discipline is training.
 2. Colossians 3:21—encouragement is necessary.
 3. Proverbs 22:15, 29:15, 17, 19, 21—God commands discipline.
 4. The husband is the chief discipler.
 5. Wife and husband should agree on the “rules,” lest the children pick and choose whom to obey!
 6. Proverbs 22:6—areas of training: Respect toward authority, speech and openness, affection, manners, tidiness, moodiness.
 7. Have regular discipling times with each child.

Other Important Matters

- Regular, consistent family devotionals.
 - Be on time to church. Allow extra time, particularly considering the children. Plan to come early!
 - Pray with the children before they go to bed.
 - Have a weekly family time.
 - If you have Christian children, work with the preteen or teen ministry. Embrace feedback. Do not be defensive.

Practicals

- Create a simple system of allowances and incentives for the children.
- Take the whole family out evangelizing. Reach out to other families as a family.
- Ask Christians you respect to recommend helpful books.