

# Better Future

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# Better Future

**A Guide to Eternity**

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**Managing Editor:**

**Joy M. Thomas**

**Editor:**

**Sohil Prasad**

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**Editorial Board:**

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**K.V Raju**

**Manager:**

**P.V Varghese**

**Coordinator:**

**T.C Varghese**

**Graphics:**

**EJ Mackal**

**Address:**

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**Mackal Building, Oravakal**

**Amayannoor P.O, Kottayam**

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**Phone No. 08547916678**

**E-mail ID: [righteouspathmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:righteouspathmagazine@gmail.com)**

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# EDITORIAL

*Sohil Prasad*

As I prepare to pen down the editorial, various news pouring in from various quarters of our world indicate towards the most exciting event the world is ever going to witness. Each passing moment brings us closer to our Saviour's return. We heard about the signs in the sky - how the planets aligned themselves to produce a unique phenomenon which occurs only once in thousands of years. We heard about the raging of the seas producing devastating storms, annihilating whatever comes in its way. We hear about kingdoms preparing for war against another, egos of men willing to risk the lives of their civilians. From the Middle East we keep hearing about the 'Fig Tree' becoming tender and green and opening its door for the gospel.

Without sounding hysterical, I must confess that I feel that the return of our Lord is now at the doors. Instead of trying to guess the dates and seasons it would be wise for us to prepare for His coming. The Pharisees, inspite of possessing great knowledge, couldn't comprehend the scriptures regarding the Messiah's coming, suffering and resurrection.

May the oil in our lamps never cease. May we be found alert watching unto prayer. When there was a midnight cry about the bridegroom's coming, the virgins would greet Him with lighted lamps. May His servants be found vigilant and quick to open the door for their Master. Lastly, may we have the wedding garments which qualify us to attend the King's supper.



# HEART TO HEART

## LOOK UP

*Joy M. Thomas*

**I**t's human to be discouraged at some part of our life journey. Facing discouragement is like passing a test each time it knocks on our door. We require a divine boost every now and then. After a temporary success, the joy that is in our heart dwindles away. Negative thoughts start hitting our mind. You might have experienced this in your own life.

Abraham was in a similar situation. We read about his great success in Genesis chapter 14. He defeated a combined army of four stronger kings. He delivered and brought back Lot and the other captives along with

their possessions. The king of Sodom went to meet him and paid him great respect and honor. Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High brought him some bread and wine and blessed him. Abraham was excited over the great victory.

What happened after this? Abraham became discouraged. A fear started to trouble his heart. He thought he had already reached his limits. It seemed that his future was in the dark.

Abraham was a great man of faith; even then his heart was shaken. It's quite natural that we

are discouraged at some point of time in our life. It happens with everyone. But don't stay discouraged. God wants you to rise up from there. That's why He wants to speak to you through this message.

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***“Facing discouragement is like passing a test each time it knocks on our door.”***

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The Lord spoke to Abraham in a vision and said to him: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward” (Genesis 15:1).

God's gentle voice boosted Abraham. He was encouraged and opened his heart to the Lord. He said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus? (Genesis 15:2). He honestly confessed the reason for his discouragement. Our God is compassionate and merciful. He is filled with unfailing love. He knows how weak we are, and remembers we are only dust. A single word that proceeds from His mouth is enough to strengthen us. What

makes you discouraged? Open your heart to the Lord in prayer. Abraham did so, and the Lord answered his prayer.

God said to Abraham: “A son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” God had given him the promise earlier when He called him out- “I will make you into a great nation” (Genesis 12:1). But after a few years passed, Abraham became discouraged because he could not see the fulfillment of God's promise in its expected time.

As he was becoming older he started to think about the Lord's promise as an impossibility. That's our human nature. Unfortunately, many people are like this- they have a negative vision for their life.

God is faithful and able to fulfil His promises. He is not bound by time. He is above all limits. He is the Almighty God!

The Lord took Abraham out of his tent and said: “Look up at the sky and count the stars” (Genesis 15:5).

Discouraged people are always looking down. They lack the hope to look up. They see nothing ahead. When they look down they feel limited, frustrated and doors seem to be closed before them. This is absolute-

ly wrong. Friend, you need to ‘Look Up.’

You have somebody very responsible ‘up’ there - Your Father in Heaven who cares for you!

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***“It’s quiet natural that we are discouraged at some point of time in our life. It happens with everyone. But don’t stay discouraged. God wants you to rise up from there.”***

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See what the psalmist says, “I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1, 2). The maker of heaven and earth is the One who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing. He is the God of hope! Your help comes from Him.

Stars in the sky were twinkling at Abraham as he looked up. The psalmist says, “The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display His craftsmanship” (Psalm 19:1). They make their Maker known. God told Abraham, “Count the stars if

you can.” ‘It’s impossible’ he whispered. What a marvelous truth this is! Man is too little to comprehend His majesty, might and splendor. What God did through His creation is beyond our imagination and understanding! Your help comes from Him.

Abraham understood God deeper than before. Realizing who God is, his faith increased. He believed the Lord and the Lord counted him as righteous. His faith agreed fully with the truth about who God is.

Dear friend, like Abraham, ‘look up’ to God and acknowledge Him as your Lord. Your help comes from Him.

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***“When you receive God’s love and encouragement, it will empower you to do more than you ever thought possible.”***

***- Victoria Osteen***

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## DEVOTION

### One who stands in the Divine Council

*Saju Mathew*

Reading: Jeremiah 23: 9-32

“But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear His word?” Jeremiah 23:18

After rebuking the wicked kings, (VV 1-8) Jeremiah turns against false prophets. God says; “In the prophets of Jerusalem also I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies; and they strengthen the hands of evil-doers, so that none doth return from his wickedness” (v.14 ASV).

The anointed prophets, counted on to rebuke adulterers and liars, commit the very same sins without fear or compunc-

tion. What’s more, they even strengthen the wicked by approving their evil deeds. Obviously, when people see a prophet indulging in the very same sins and sinful ways they are in, their hearts are toughened and reinforced to continue in their sins. (The wicked probably have more fear in their heart to do evil, than these prophets... That must be one of the reasons they need ‘strengthening...’)

When the wicked are not rebuked appropriately, sin is trivialised. God laments: “It is from the prophets of Jerusalem profaneness has gone out into all the land.” (v.15 NKJV) If the prophet is holy, holiness



will flow from him to the land. Oh, if he is wicked, wickedness flows... Prophet, you are a channel. How vigilant and cautious you need to be, when you are in the limelight!

Prophets are considered ambassadors of God, and they are! The oracles of a prophet normally begins with a turn of the phrase, "Thus says the Lord". (1. Samuel.10: 17, 18; 2 Kings 20: 13, 14; Isaiah 1: 2; Jer. 2: 4 – This phrase occurs more than 400 times in the Bible). Why do they stick to this foundational phrase? They emphasize the fact that the words are not their own; but from Jehovah God!

Just as contemporary governments have spokespersons to proclaim their decisions, the kings of those days also had spokespersons. While proclaiming royal declarations to the common public, they would begin with the phrase, "Thus says the king..."

Should someone ask how he knew it, he would respond... "That's because when the king proclaimed this, I was present at the 'Royal Council.' " When the prophet starts his oracle with "Thus says the LORD," he is claiming to have been in the "Divine Council" (like the

royal spokesperson in the Royal Council), and that he has heard the voice of God. It is this confidence of his having been in the Divine Council, that gave the prophet the authority to "speak on behalf" of God! Prophets are not just "foretellers," they are "forth tellers," speaking on behalf of God! It is sad to see, these days, that foretellers are appraised as prophets; and genuine prophets who speak what they have heard directly from God are considered as merely "preachers!"

God said that Aaron would be the "prophet" of Moses (Exodus 7: 1), meaning, he would speak the words of Moses (not his own) to Pharaoh. Prophets are but just a "voice" of the Lord. Nevertheless, if a prophet turns out to be bogus, he has the potential to deceive people by pretending to have come straight from the divine council, while prophesying "visualizations of his own mind" (v.16). "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied," says the LORD (v.21)

What is the technique to discern a prophet? How can we know that he is an authentic ambassador of God and, is coming from

the divine council?

The first proof is the life of the prophet. If he leads an unholy life, leave him. Those who stand in the Divine Council of a Holy God cannot live in sin. In addition, a real prophet will rebuke wickedness. A false prophet, however, will console and assure you of peace even when you walk in wickedness (v.17).

The prophet who has found the time to stand in the Divine Council of the Lord will turn God's people from their evil ways and deeds (v. 22). He is a man on behalf of God. He will do what God would do to the people of God. His concern is God's concern. His mind is God's mind. His heart is God's heart... He stands, speaks and lives for God! He is building God's kingdom...not his own. Those who have been in the divine council can think nothing other than God and His kingdom!

God says He is furious towards those prophets who proclaim 'I had a dream! I had a dream' and prophesy lies in His name (v.25). When they describe their dreams to the people (as if they received it from the divine council), gullible and unsuspecting people look to them

with awe and forget the 'Name' of the Lord! (v.27) 'Name' here means the character-the holiness- of God!

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***“The prophet who has found the time to stand in the Divine Council of the Lord will turn God’s people from their evil ways and deeds.”***

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“Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has My Word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?” (Jer 23:28)

One can talk of a dream from his own mind, but to tell the “Word” he needs to stand in the divine council. Dream is like straw, big to see. Word is like grain, small to see. However, dig deep and sow the seed...It will grow and eventually bear fruit! God's wrath is on the prophets who fail to bring the holiness of God upon the people! Word is like fire (Jer 23.29) that burns the straw, and it is the hammer that breaks all hard evil rocks into pieces!

*Prayer: Lord, help me stand in Your divine council to perceive Thy word, so that I can be a true messenger of Thy character in this crooked generation- Amen!*

Further readings:

(Micah 3:5-12, Ezekiel 22: 25-31)

*Better Future/ January 2018*



# Women Characters of the Bible

## Eve And The Temptation

*Elsie Joy*

This is the continuation of our study on Eve. In the last issue we looked at two aspects of her life. Firstly, we saw that God created woman in His own likeness and image. Secondly, we saw that she was created as a helpmate. We also looked into the marriage that God instituted for man. Now let us look further into other aspects of her life.

### **Temptation**

“One day he (the serpent) asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. “It’s only the

fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’” “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.” The woman was convinced.” (Genesis 3: 1-6 NLT) Commonly, women are more talkative than men. The devil trapped Eve through a conversation which he initiated. King Solomon gives us a valuable advice-“Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut” (Proverb

10:19NLT). The one who controls his tongue is regarded as wise and religious (James 1:26). We must ask God for wisdom and discernment so that we may speak the right words at the right time with the right attitude to people whom we meet. James exhorts us: “For if we could control our tongue, we would be perfect and would be able to control ourselves in every other way” (James 3: 2 NLT).

Eve made a mistake. She gave unnecessary freedom to the serpent. The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals. She didn't use her God given gift of discernment to know its cunningness.

Women have a natural ability to discern people better than men. Use it for your own safety. As you hear lots of stories that happen around us, especially the attacks on women, please be alert and use your ability to discern others. Eve should have stopped the serpent when it started attacking God's command. This is my advice to you; please keep a distance from people whose intentions are wrong. Don't entertain those people who try to divert your attention from the Lord and His commands.

Don't allow anyone to mislead you through their superficially attractive foolish talks.

The devil diluted the importance of obeying God's commands diligently. Eve believed the lies of the devil, as though it were the truth. Even today the devil is continuing the same thing. Believers need to be alert. In Eden, the devil used the serpent as a medium to get access to Eve. Today the devil has so many ways to get access into your life. He won't come to you in his original form but through someone or something. The devil knows to speak using very attractive language of pleasing your flesh. Beware of his tricks and schemes. Paul expressed his fear about the believers at Corinth – “But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent” (2 Corinthians 11: 3 NLT).

I would like to tell you the same thing here. Don't think that the serpent was the devil. The serpent was a wild animal, created by God (Genesis 3: 1). It became the channel of the devil and thus it was cursed. “...God said to the serpent, “Because you



have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live” (Genesis 3: 14 NLT). Whoever becomes a medium of the devil has become equivalent to the devil himself. That is why Jesus said to Peter once, “Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s” (Matthew 16: 23 NLT). Another verse says about Judas – “Then Jesus said, “I chose the twelve of you, but one is a devil”. He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot, one of the twelve, who would later betray Him” (John 6: 70, 71 NLT). From these verses it is apparent that whoever becomes the devil’s agent is considered as a devil.

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***Don’t entertain those people who try to divert your attention from the Lord and His commands. Don’t allow anyone to mislead you through their superficially attractive foolish talks.***

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You have to find out things or even people who are used by the devil to influence your life. Anything that will corrupt your pure and undivided devotion to Christ is to be noticed. Be wise and shut those doors against the devil.

When Eve inclined towards the serpent, she became the agent of Satan and tempted Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. Those who fall will cause others to fall. That’s why the Bible warns us against walking in the counsel of the wicked and the fellowship of sinners and mockers (Psalm 1:1). So be careful with whom you have fellowship. Who are your role models?

Your steadfastness means a lot. If you stand firm in the Lord, you will be able to strengthen others in the Lord. You will be a challenge and an encouragement to many. This is the will of God concerning you in Christ Jesus! Amen.



A photograph of a person standing in a vast green field, seen from behind with arms raised towards a dramatic sunset sky with orange and blue clouds.

## PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

# THE GODLY ARE WISE

*JP Palathingal*

*“The godly are like trees that bear life-giving fruit, and those who save lives are wise.” (Proverbs 11:30).*

A godly person is a model of a meaningful life. Like a tree attracts people to its shade, a godly person’s sense of purpose attracts others who want to know how they, too, can find meaning and purpose in their life. Gaining wisdom yourself can be the first step in leading people to God. I know one preacher of the Gospel who said to me that non-Christian neighbors and friends were persecuting him for the sake of the Gospel. But after asking some questions I discovered that his

usual greeting to them was this: “Hello, did you know that you are going to hell?” While others may break relationship with us because of our commitment to Jesus, we must be careful that they are not alienated by our insensitivity and tactlessness. We must recognize the difference between estrangement resulting from our commitment to Jesus and that caused by our clumsiness and recklessness.

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***Gaining wisdom yourself can be the first step in leading people to God.***

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The above scripture says: If you are a godly person, you ought to be wise about the way you share your faith with those who are out of His Kingdom.

For example: If you are a wise salesman and you want to catch a market in a new place for long term business, you never tell the shop keepers and people around there that all the other brand detergents are bad and only your detergent is the best of all. No, if you are really wise you will say, "Please use our brand once, then you never use any other brand forever." You are challenging them with confidence of your material.

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***We must recognize the difference between estrangement resulting from our commitment to Jesus and that caused by our clumsiness and recklessness.***

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If you are 100% sure that Jesus Christ is the only answer to all the problems of mankind and only through Him human beings can receive salvation, then you should be wise and decent to people outside the Kingdom. Remember Revelation 3:20 always.

"Live wisely among those who are not Christians (those who have not accepted Jesus as the only Savior and Lord of mankind), and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone" (Colossians 4:5, 6).

One effective teacher of the Word of God prays this prayer as soon as he opens his eyes in the morning: "Lord, help me to be wise in all my relationships this day and grant me that I might not cause anyone to stumble because of my wrong word or action." Are you willing to pray this prayer daily?

**"WE DRAW PEOPLE TO CHRIST NOT BY LOUDLY DISCREDITING WHAT THEY BELIEVE, BY TELLING THEM HOW WRONG THEY ARE AND HOW RIGHT WE ARE, BUT BY SHOWING THEM A LIGHT THAT IS SO LOVELY THAT THEY WANT WITH ALL THEIR HEARTS TO KNOW THE SOURCE OF IT."**

**- MAGDELEINE L'ENGLE**



## Challenges Of Students - A Christian Perspective

*Vivian Varghese*

Today cars are faster, phones are smarter, internet is quicker, our world is smaller, information and communication has moved from notebook to fingertip to touch-yet ours is a generation more isolated and lost than ever. Within a span of couple of decades, educational institutes, career options, availability of funding, opportunities abroad, coaching institutes, information access, etc. have grown exponentially. However, the consequences have also multiplied in terms of uncertainty, confusion, competition and associated costs. Ironically, even as IQ levels are touching new highs, common sense is not so

common any more. The trend reported in the cases of depression among youth is alarming. In this scenario of ever growing chaos, is there any hope? As Christians, how do we approach these situations and carve out a path for ourselves? The bad news is that there is no ready reference roadmap available. The good news is that, He says "I am the way". Let us delve into a few specific challenges we face today and then view them in the light of God's Word.

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***"A smart man makes a mistake, learns from it, and never makes that mistake again."***

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## 1. EDUCATION

Students are expected to study hard so that they can have better lives and secure their future.

The measure of a student gets measured by the glamour of his report card. However, statistics don't define a person. We keep striving for better institutes, better coaching, better counseling so that we can have better jobs (not necessarily, a career). There are individual aspirations, parental aspirations and peer group influences. Sometimes, parental aspirations turn into compulsions, mostly out of sheer concern. Then, how do we as students arrive at a decision? The answer is astounding and simple:

a. Fear of the Lord is beginning of understanding. Psalm 111:10

b. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. Psalm 37:4-5.

c. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men. Col 3:23.

The liberating truth is God has provided us freewill to choose. As Christian students when we pursue our lives with the fear of the Lord, He gives us understanding. He has also given us the ability to have dreams and desires. If we commit them to the Lord and trust in Him, He can make us successful in whatever we do; Think! Whatever! A far better attitude is to do all things as unto the Lord. Illustration: David was a shepherd, God took him and made him a king; Moses was a king, God took him and made him a shepherd. Hence, it is God who makes the ultimate difference. Educate ourselves in the fear of the Lord and He will direct our path.

## 2. MEDIA.

The influence of media is phenomenal and is causing a variety of damages. There is incredible explosion of information in both print and electronic forms. The exposure is too much to handle. As students we are getting exposed to information, discussions, debates that too by eminent personalities which are ahead of our times and ability to digest. This exposure is generating curiosity and the pursuit

of this curiosity is trapping innocent minds in a downward spiral. The more worrisome fact is the ease of access and how students by scores are sucked into this virtual reality. Students are hooked upon television, internet and games. The personality development of students is getting stunted with the advent of chatting, sms and mobiles replacing one to one dialogue and appreciation. With them come the agonizing tales of abuse, fear, seclusion and loss of self-worth. However, this area remains largely unspoken and unaddressed due to social stigma. Sometimes we fail to accept the role media is playing in shaping our minds. The media has mastered the art of feeding our appetite and numbing our consciousness. The consequences are severe. And hence, God presents an effective solution to the problem.

a. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you, for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell (Matt 5:29).

b. Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you (Psalm 119:11).

c. Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore, do not despise the chastening of the Almighty (Job 5:17).

It is a sad statistic if we analyse the amount of time the media is stealing from our lives and that too to stack up potentially hazardous information and audio and visuals which lead to our downfall. One of the underlying reasons is the loneliness and emptiness which pervades our homes.

*Replacing the constant flow of information with the Word of God and being vigilant is the key to liberation.*

No wonder the Bible again and again calls us to meditate on the Word of God to transform our minds. As Christians, we have a responsibility to conquer this menace and also have a duty to minister to many fellow beings. The scope in media ministry is tremendous.



# BIBLE STUDY



## DISCIPLESHIP

*Rincy Cherian*

**D**iscipleship is at the heart and core of the Christian faith. Just before returning to the Father after completing His mission on earth, Jesus instructed His disciples to go into the whole world and “make disciples” of all people groups

*(Matthew 28:18-20)*

The word ‘disciple’ comes from the Greek word *mathetes*, which basically means ‘a learner’ or ‘a student’. In the Bible, however, the word is used in a far deeper way.

*“After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”  
John 21:15*

### **Discipleship: The Essential Elements**

#### **1) It is a life of Wholehearted Love**

*(Luke 14:26)*

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters- yes, even their own life- such a person cannot be My disciple.”

The word ‘hate’, used over here, means “to love less”. What the Lord calls for is a type of loyalty that is so true and wholehearted that every other attachment- be it to one’s parents, the other members of one’s family, or even to one’s own life- is subjected to it. It does not mean that we cannot love anybody else; it means

that even the most intimate human relationship is governed by this relationship. Any individual who desires to become a disciple of Jesus must give Him first place in their hearts. The Lord Jesus is to be preeminent in one's life.

## **2) It is a life of Daily Self-denial**

(Luke 14:27)

“Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me.”

There are three aspects highlighted here- ‘denying self’, ‘taking up the cross’ and ‘following Jesus’. To deny self means to “say No” to “my self”. It implies a turning from self-centredness, renouncing living for self. John Stott says: “Self denied... is not to deny ‘things’ to myself, but to deny ‘myself’ to myself. It is to say No to self and Yes to Christ; to repudiate self and acknowledge Christ.”

A cross was an instrument of death in early days. When Jesus uses the term along with the phrase ‘deny self’, it carries the idea of “dying to my right to myself and of living to promote my own interests”. The Greek word ‘follow’ implies “to join one as a disciple; to become or

be a disciple”. The tense of the verb ‘follow’ indicates that it means to “continually follow”. Following Jesus is a daily, life-long commitment.

## **3) It is a life of Total Surrender**

(Luke 14:33)

“..... those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be My disciple”.

In discipleship, we submit everything we have to Jesus- our time, talents, treasures and everything that goes on in our lives. Giving ‘up’ everything means that we give ‘over’ everything to the King, loosening our grip on all matters and using all we have for His purposes.

There is no area we can withhold from the Lord. He is worthy to receive all our adoration, devotion and submission. Jesus died for us so that we may live entirely for Him and not for ourselves (2 Corinthians 5:15). Following His descriptions about the life of discipleship, Jesus highlighted the absolute necessity of living completely on His terms. “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it but whoever loses their life for Me and the Gospel will save it” (Mark 8:35). The key to understanding the meaning of this



verse is the word 'lose' (whoever wants to save their life will lose it). It is precisely the same Greek word that is translated 'perish' in other parts of the New Testament such as John 3:16 and 2 Peter 3:9: it means to "die eternally".

### **Discipleship: The Everyday Experience**

Discipleship has two parts: An Initial Commitment and a Life-long Consecration. Discipleship as an initial commitment is the placing of one's trust in Christ; whereas discipleship as a life-long consecration is a life of surrender to Christ.

A person who truly repents and believes in the Gospel will have a thoroughly changed life. The overall inclination or direction of his life, from the heart attitudes and motivations to the outward behavior, completely changes. Where his life used to be centered around self and the pursuit of selfish interests, it is now centered around Christ and His interests. No disciple will lead a sinlessly perfect life, but the desire of the heart—the practice or lifestyle of the new creature in Christ— will be to love the Lord and do His will.

Discipleship is not about trying to imitate the Lord but learning to be totally inhabited by Him through the Holy Spirit. It is about enjoying sweet intimacy with the Lord so that His love is experienced by us and His life flows out from within us.

All who consider themselves followers of the Lord need to examine themselves along these lines:

"Have I turned from living for myself and committed to Jesus as His disciple? Have I accepted His terms as He has defined it in Matthew 11:28-30, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 14:25-33 and John 12:24-26?"

"Whom do I live for: Jesus Christ or myself? Am I led by the Holy Spirit or do I rule my own life? Am I surrendered to Him so I may be what He wants me to be, go where He wants me to go, and do what He wants me do?" "What do I live for? This world and the fulfillment of my own desires, plans and ambitions, or serving the Lord's purpose and the interests of the Kingdom of God?"

***"A person who truly repents and believes in the Gospel will have a thoroughly changed life."***

## Discipleship:

### The External Engagement

The early church made disciples by planting “vibrant Christian communities” or establishing “authentic groups of Christian believers” throughout the world. In a setting where believers gathered and bonded together, discipleship thrived. They had adopted this pattern from the Lord Jesus who had disciplined them in the environment of a small community. There, in that group, He had opened up Himself and shared His life with them for three and a half years. During that time, they had experienced Him investing into their lives and leading by example. They had been taught and empowered to do what He did. In that atmosphere, they had been able to receive strength, encouragement, correction and live out their faith.

In order to grow and flourish as disciples, we need to live in fellowship with others in the Body of Christ. True and radical discipleship happens in the context of community. We increase in our understanding and experience of the Lord through meeting and associating with other believers. We are mutually

encouraged and enlightened as we pursue the Lord with those of similar heart and mind. Spiritual growth and transformation takes place as we open our lives before one another and actively participate in corporate gatherings.

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*Happy New Year 2018 to all our beloved readers. We pray that this year may be crowned with God's mercies and His divine presence would lead you in the path of victory and success. New years are like milestones . Each time we come across them in our journey of life, they make us ponder over the course that has been covered and that which still remains. In a way they make us wise. The Psalmist in 90th Psalm verse 12 says , “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.”*

*The phrase “number our days” expresses the thought of putting in order, arranging the use of, or prioritizing time so that we may be considered wise. The past year might have been spent in reckless living to appease our desires. In this process many might have received grievous wounds, others might have inflicted wounds on the ones who love us selflessly. In the hour that impatience had the better of us, our words served as sparks on dry grass. Many relationships were reduced to ash. Let us make a conscious effort to live wisely this year. This year may we move from strength to strength, faith to faith and grace to grace.*

*- Righteous Path Family*

**“Life** is a precious gift of God,  
But it is *temporary*.  
Eternal life is the most precious  
and priceless **gift of God**  
which **everyone** needs to  
receive by *faith* with a  
grateful heart.”

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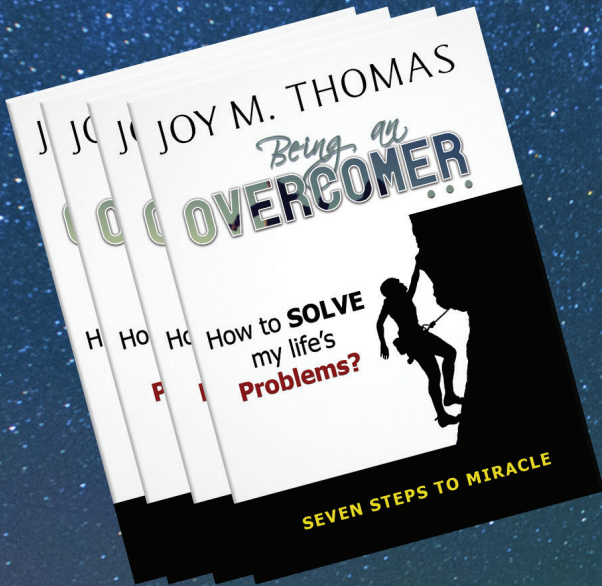


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