

## **Facing The Fear**

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It has been said that the best way to overcome what you fear is to face the fear. What may be possibly the most basic human fear is loss of identity. That deep down resistance to letting go of one’s desires, wants, goals, ambitions and life-style. The fear of loss of self-determination, self-direction. The fear of loss of will.

That basic fear of giving up your will is exactly the challenge Christians face every day. Jesus Christ has been an ‘in your face’ challenger to His followers as the gospels show. Jesus called two fishermen, Peter and his brother Andrew and “*they left their nets at once and followed Him.*”(Mt 4:20). He called James and John and “*At once, leaving the boat and their father, they followed Him.*” (Mt 4:22)

Jesus saw Matthew at his seat at the custom-house, called him and Matthew got up and followed Him, (Mt 9:9). Jesus challenged the young man who wanted to follow Him, “*go and sell all that you possess ... then come back and follow me.*” (Mt 19: 21). Jesus Christ’s ‘in your face’ challenge in the above examples was to change His followers’ current lifestyles!

So what does it take to be a follower or disciple of Christ? In other words, what is discipleship?

Discipleship is to have faith in Jesus Christ and to follow Christ whenever and wherever He calls. It is an invitation to share in His life, to live according to His values and to face realistically the cost of discipleship. Peter the Apostle, left everything he possessed to follow Christ.

He gave up his will – “*Master, I have been fishing all night long and have caught nothing. In obedience to your word I will let down the net.*” He caught many fish.

Today, you might be required to confront something which may seem humanly impossible – an annoying neighbour, a difficult child or student, financial problems, etc. Remember, discipleship is to have faith in Jesus Christ. With God all things are possible.

Discipleship is more than simply professing the faith verbally. It is more than saying I believe in God, or I love you God, or I am a regular churchgoer, and read my bible daily. I pray every day therefore I am alright. I am not alright at all. Reflect now upon these words.

To whom much is given, much is expected. Ten lepers were made clean. One of them travelled on foot, back to where Jesus was, to express thanks instead of being satisfied with a short prayer of thanksgiving.

Do kind deeds today to please God and your neighbour, particularly the person you dislike.

Discipleship is a life of inwardness. Loving and serving God and our neighbour from the heart. The virtue of the Scribes and Pharisees consisted in their ability to measure external conformity to the Law of Moses, but Jesus goes to the heart.

Two men went to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. While the Pharisee was very wordy the Publican bowed his head and prayed "*Lord, be merciful to me a sinner*". He prayed from the heart. If the heart is right, all external actions would be good. Give me, O Lord, a loving heart so that I could love others as I love myself.

Discipleship is a life of wholeness. Our whole life should indicate that we are followers of Christ. How about the way you dress? Are you one of those who dresses very immodestly, baring parts that should be covered? How about the way you talk? Are you among those who are prone to damage the reputation of others?

Are you among those who are inclined to falsely accuse others? Those who do not offend with the tongue can be called His followers. Let us try today. Lord, help me today to rise above natural likes and dislikes and love the way you love – from the heart.

Discipleship is a life of wholeness. It is a life of living faith – faith in action. Today serve those who need to be served. We should love without discrimination – unconditionally.

Loving others because I love the way he/she speaks, is not the Christian way. The Christian way of living is reaching out to help all in need, even our enemies because they are God's creatures too. The Christian way of living is doing a full day's work for a full day's pay.

The Christian way of living is being compassionate, being caring. The Christian way of living is the willingness to be kind and forgiving. The Christian way of living is respect for life and respect for one another. Help us, Lord, to make a difference through our way of witness.

Let us pray: Dear God, help us as Christian disciples to speak truthfully at all times, to live honestly, to love one another, even our enemies. Help us to be conscious that we are dealing with God in all areas of our lives. We should not welcome Him in certain areas of our lives and keep Him out of others.

Help us to remember that we cannot serve God and mammon. Let Jesus be the centre of our lives if we want to be perfect. The Jesus Way is the only way.