

# DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS

"Trust"  
9/16/12

Verses from New Living Translation unless noted.



## Prayer and Note-taking Outline

Jesus said, "I came that you might have life and have it abundantly."

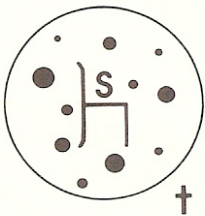
But in order for us to experience that abundant life he offers, we must be willing to follow him completely, which means becoming a disciple maker. And that task requires a lot of faith and trust.

Trust – when I check my thesaurus, the first word that appears is FAITH. The OT frequently uses the word trust. Jesus used the word faith. When we make the decision to follow Christ we begin a great adventure of faith.

For the last couple of weeks we've talked about being filled with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus left the planet he told his followers that he would send his Holy Spirit to empower them to do the work he's commanded them to do.

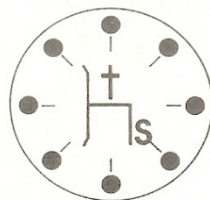
Let's review:

Last week I said that living the Christian life is not hard; it's impossible! We can't do it in our own strength. That's one of the reasons Jesus sent his Spirit to live within us – to enable us to do what would be impossible for us.



Maybe you've seen these diagrams before. This one represents the Natural Man – a man with self on the throne and Christ outside the life. The dots represent the interests of the life: job, family, friends, hobbies, whatever. Without Christ in the life there is frustration and discord.

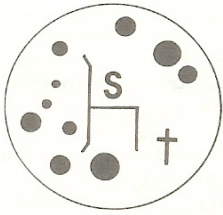
life, or  
Holy Spirit to  
life, self yields  
with Gods plan



This circle represents the Christ controlled spiritual person. When we allow Christ's take his rightful place on the throne of our the throne to Christ, the result is harmony for the life.

Characteristics of the Spiritual person: Christ-centered, empowered by the Holy Spirit, introduces others to Christ, effective prayer life, understands God's Word, trusts God, obeys God; the fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Now the degree to which these are manifested in the life depends upon the extent to which the Christian trusts the Lord with every detail of his life and upon his maturity in Christ. (Walnut tree)



But then there is a third circle. This is the carnal person. Carnal – this comes from the word “carnivorous” or fleshly. The carnal person is trying to live the Christian life in his own power, the power of his flesh.

Self is back on the throne; Christ is inside the life but not on the throne and the interests of the life are in discord again, just like the Natural Man.

Some of the traits that characterize the carnal person are: ignorance of spiritual heritage, unbelief, disobedience, loss of love for God and others, poor prayer life, no desire for Bible study; legalistic attitudes, impure thoughts, jealousy, guilt, worry, discouragement, critical spirit, frustration, and aimlessness.

The individual who professes to be a Christian but who continues to practice sin should realize that he may not be a Christian at all, according to 1 John 2:3; 3:6, 9 and Eph 5:5.

“Practice sin” – that means you’re trying to get good at it. The person filled with the spirit isn’t sinless, but they do sin less. Now let’s get to what it means to live by faith – a life of trust. A person who is truly living by faith has learned to breathe spiritually.

### 1<sup>st</sup> BREATHE SPIRITUALLY

As you walk by faith (and that’s what true Christ followers do), we learn to practice Spiritual Breathing. Spiritual Breathing, like physical breathing, is a process of exhaling the impure and inhaling the pure.

The moment you invited Christ into your life as Savior and Lord, you were born spiritually. You became a child of God and you were filled with the Holy Spirit.

God forgave your sins – past, present and future – making you righteous, holy and acceptable in His sight, because of Christ’s sacrifice for you on the cross. And, you were given the power to live a holy life.

But the average Christian does not understand this concept of Spiritual Breathing, an exercise of faith that enables us to walk consistently in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As a result, our lives are like a spiritual roller coaster. We have an up and down spiritual experience, living most of our life as a carnal Christians, controlling our own life – frustrated and fruitless. Profession without performance is detrimental to the cause of Christ.

Spiritual Breathing enables us to get off this spiritual roller coaster and enjoy the Christian life that the Lord Jesus promised to you when He said, “I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly.” Here’s how it works:

If you sin by committing a deliberate act of disobedience, breathe spiritually.

A. EXHALE by confession. God’s Word promises in John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

What does it mean to confess? In the Greek, the original language of the New Testament, the word “confess” (*homologeō*) means to “agree with” or to “say the same.” Such agreement involves at least three considerations.

1. First, you acknowledge that your sin or sins – which should be named to God specifically – are wrong and are therefore grievous to Him.
2. Second, you recognize that God has already forgiven you through Christ’s death on the cross for your sins.
3. Third, you repent, which means that you change your attitude toward your sin.

The power of the Holy Spirit will enable you to change both your attitude and conduct. Instead of doing what your old sinful nature – your flesh – wants to do, you can do what God wants you to do.

B. INHALE by appropriating the fullness of God’s Spirit by faith. Surrender control to the Holy Spirit according to God’s command to “be filled with the Spirit” which actually means to be constantly and continually controlled and empowered with the Holy Spirit.

According to His promise, God hears you and grants your request because you pray according to His will. 1 John 5:14-15 “..if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.”

The practice of spiritual breathing will get off your spiritual roller coaster, you will cease to be a fleshly or carnal Christian, and you will become a Spirit-filled believer exhibiting the character of Christ.

A Christian should never be down. We should either be up or getting up!

Now you become a carnal Christian again when you develop (over time) an attitude of unbelief – when you set your heart against believing the promises of 1 John 1:9 and 1 Corinthians 10:13:

“The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.”

You do not become carnal simply by committing one sin or a dozen provided that you *sincerely* continue to breathe spiritually. You will become carnal only when you develop an attitude of unbelief, turn away from God and refuse to breathe spiritually.

Argument with Jackie

You can know right now that you are filled with the Holy Spirit. Through the practice of Spiritual Breathing, you can go through life assured of his fullness. Simply keep short accounts with God. Do not let sins accumulate. Are you sure? “Hope so” won’t do.

Now I’m not suggesting that the Christian who walks in the fullness of the Spirit will have no difficulties or challenges. Poor health, loss of loved ones, financial needs and other such experiences are common to all people.

However, many of our challenges, struggles in this life are self-imposed because of our own worldly, selfish actions. The spiritual person is spared most of these self-imposed hardships.

And when the problems do come, the spiritual person can face them with a calm, confident attitude because he is aware of God’s resources which are available to him to deal with adversity.

This is not simply a matter of positive thinking. You are instructed to “Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.” 1 Peter 5:7

The spiritual person knows the trustworthiness of God from past experience. The Lord becomes the problem-solver, and the trials and burdens of this world are no longer too great for us when He is carrying the load.

How many of you have lost your home, your job, seen your savings evaporate, or your investments devalued, in the last few years?

For Jackie and I, like many of you, this economy has wiped out much of our retirement funds. It’s easy in these times to become worried, concerned and anxious about the future.

But I have to remind myself of the faithfulness and trustworthiness of God and not give in to our old nature.

The Apostle Paul said, "My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

That is what the Christian life is all about – just keeping Christ on the throne.

On the authority of God's command and his promise, you can pray according to His will and know that He will fill you –control and empower you.

Remember that the Holy Spirit already dwells within you if you are a believer. You do not have to ask him to come into your life; he is already indwelling you. Your body was a temple of God from the moment you became a Christian. So you simply say to Him, "I surrender my life to You, and by faith I claim Your fullness and power."

Do not depend upon feelings. Feelings are unreliable in evaluating your relationship with God. The unchanging promises of God's Word, not your feelings, are your authority. The Christian is to live by faith, trusting in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word.

A train is a good illustration of the relationship between fact, faith and feeling.



Let us call the train engine "fact" – the fact of God's promises found in His Word. The coal car we will call "faith" – your trust in God and His Word. The caboose we will call "feelings."

As coal is shoveled into the engine, the train runs. It would be futile and, of course, ridiculous to attempt to pull the train by the caboose.

In the same way you, as a Christian, should not depend upon feelings or emotion to live a Spirit-filled life. Rather, God wants you to simply place your faith in his trustworthiness and the promises of His Word.

Feelings are like the caboose – they are the result of faith and obedience. We should never depend on feelings or seek after them. The very act of looking for a feeling is a denial of the concept of faith, and whatever is not of faith is sin.

To summarize then, you can know that you are filled with the Holy Spirit by trusting in God – His command and promise – and you can enjoy that assurance.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> BE PREPARED FOR CONFLICT

Satan no longer reigns in your life, but he still fights. If you don't run into opposition, you're going the wrong way. Remember, if you have no battles, you will have no victories.

In 1 Samuel 17 we have one of the most famous stories of faith in the OT. It has inspired children and adults for over 3000 years. David is only a shepherd boy, maybe 17 years old. He had seven brothers and three of them had joined the army to fight the Philistines, Israel's arch enemy.

David is sent by his father to deliver food provisions to his older brothers and when he gets to the camp he witnesses first hand a sight that had caused terror to grip the entire army of Israel.

A giant named Goliath was the Philistine champion, a man over nine feet tall. Fully dressed with armor and weapons he strutted on one side of the Elah Valley shouting his defiance of Israel and daring anyone to fight him.

David knew little of warfare but he knew his God and he convinced Israel's King Saul to let him face Goliath. The Bible says David picked up five smooth stones from the stream and put them into his shepherd's bag.

Then, armed only with his shepherd's staff and sling, he started across the valley to fight the Philistine.

Goliath walked out toward David with his shield bearer ahead of him, sneering in contempt at this boy. "Am I a dog," he roared, "that you come at me with a stick?" And he cursed David by the names of his gods and then taunted, "Come over here, and I'll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!"

But David, unwilling to be bullied, yelled back, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

Today I will kill you and cut off your head, and give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel!

And everyone out here today will know that the Lord fights for his people. This battle is the Lord's, and you're dead meat!"

You know how the story ends. Goliath moved closer to attack, David ran quickly to meet him. Reaching into his shepherd's bag he took out one of the stones, he hurled it with his sling and hit the Philistine square in the forehead. The stone sank in, and Goliath stumbled and fell face down on the ground.

Then David ran over and grabbed Goliath's sword from its sheath and used it to kill him and cut off his head.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah gave a great shout and rushed after the Philistines. Bodies of the dead and wounded Philistines were strewn all along the road back to their cities.

Then the Israelite army returned and plundered the deserted Philistine camp. As Saul saw what David had done, he asked Abner, the commander of his army, "Whose kid is that?"

"I really don't know," Abner declared bewildered. "Well, find out!" the king demanded.

Soon Abner brought David to Saul with the Philistine's head still in his hand. "Tell me about your father, young man," Saul said. And David replied, "His name is Jesse, and we live in Bethlehem."

The Bible explains that there are three forces that wage war against the followers of Christ – the world, the flesh and the devil. Let's look briefly at each of these forces and remember, the battle is the Lord's.

#### A. THE WORLD

I don't know anyone who is in love with this world who has ever been used of God in any significant way. There's nothing wrong with money and other material success. However, you must wear the clothes of materialism loosely; we hold the treasure of this world with open hands.

And we never allow money or the things of this world to become our gods.

1 John 2:15-17 warns: "Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love these things you show that you do not really love God; for all these worldly things, these evil desires – the craze for sex, the ambition to buy everything that appeals to you, and the pride that comes from wealth and importance – these are not from God. They are from this evil world itself. And this world is fading away, and these evil, forbidden things will go with it, but whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever."

#### B. THE FLESH

God's Word teaches that the spiritual Christian should be prepared for battles with our flesh. You will have conflict with your flesh as long as you live. There will never be a time in this life when you are free from temptation. Galatians 5:17 says:

"The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions."

All people, no matter how spiritually mature in Christ, experience temptation and have a tendency toward sin. There is a difference, however, between temptation and sin.

Temptation is the initial thought to do something contrary to God's will. These impressions come to all men and women, even as they did to Jesus, and are not sin in themselves.

Temptation becomes sin when the impression is followed by the actual act of disobedience. Being prepared means knowing where the temptation is likely to come from and don't go there.

Galatians 5:16 says "Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

### C. THE DEVIL

Satan is a real foe – let there be no mistake about it – and we need to be prepared for conflict with him – alert to his cunning and subtle ways, as well as his obvious attempts to defeat and destroy us. 1 Peter 5:8 says:

"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."

Satan was defeated 2,000 years ago when Christ died on the cross for our sins. Though Satan has great power to influence man, he has only that power which God has granted to him.

There are counties where lions roam wild, but what do we do with lions in this country? We put them in cages. That's exactly what God has done to Satan. Visit the cage in the zoo and watch a lion pacing impatiently back and forth. He cannot hurt you.

Even if you go up close to the cage, he still cannot hurt you if you are careful. But get in the cage, and the lion will devour you.



We have nothing to fear as long as you stay out of that cage. And similarly, we have nothing to fear from Satan as long as you depend upon Christ and not on your own strength.

A word of caution is in order at this point. The practice of spiritual disciplines make us strong spiritually.

The apostle Paul said, "I can do everything through him (Christ) who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13

### 3<sup>rd</sup> LIVE BY FAITH

If you have Christ, you have everything you need, for, as Paul writes to the church in Colosse, we are complete in Him.

Bill Bright tells the story of wading down a shallow stream in Yosemite Park with his son. Because the rocks were slippery, he was holding his five-year-old, Brad, by the hand to keep him from slipping.

Suddenly Brad did slip on one of the rocks, and his feet went out from under him and he would have had a serious fall and could have been injured had Bill not held his hand firmly until his son regained his balance.

As they continued to walk, Brad looked up at his dad with an expression of gratitude and said "Daddy, I'm sure glad you saved me from falling."

Jude 24 says, "All glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling.."

This Christian life is wonderful. It is exciting! It is filled with adventure for those who follow Christ and let His Spirit control their lives. But it's a walk of faith and we walk allowing Him to "hold our hands."

There are thousands of promises for you contained in God's word, and no Christian has ever found any one of them to be untrue. When God says something, you can stake your life on it – you can know that He will not fail you.

In Romans 8:28 Paul writes, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

One young man in this church recently lost his job, but I am encouraged and proud of the way he has chosen to trust God in an uncertain time.

1 Thessalonians 5:18: "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

It's not easy to say, "Thank You, Lord," when your heart is broken because of the loss of a loved one; when your body is in pain; When you receive a letter terminating a love relationship; when you experience a financial reverse; when you fail an exam.

Some might think that only a fool would give thanks to God under such circumstances. Ho, not if you know "that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."

We can trust that God has a better plan. We can relax. You can say "Thank You" when the whole world seems to be crumbling around us because our God is sovereign and omnipotent.

He holds the world in His hands, and you can trust Him, He loves you.