

15 Practical Steps to a Deeper Relationship with Jesus

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Christian Reflections to Build your Faith, By Melkisedeck Leon Shine

Embracing a Life of Faith: A Transformative Journey of Wholehearted Surrender to Jesus

The pursuit of a life fully surrendered to Jesus Christ represents a challenging yet profoundly rewarding spiritual odyssey. Christian discipleship, characterized by unwavering faith, selfless love, and complete trust in God's divine plan, necessitates conscious commitment and intentional action. This article presents fifteen practical steps, informed by biblical principles and exemplified by scriptural narratives, to guide individuals on this transformative path. Key concepts informing this framework include the theological principles of soteriology (the study of salvation), ecclesiology (the study of the church), and pneumatology (the study of the Holy Spirit), which together highlight the individual's relationship with God, their participation in the community of faith, and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in their life. These concepts, when applied practically, form the foundation of a deeper walk with God. Furthermore, the framework of spiritual formation, understanding that spiritual growth is a process of transformation through intentional discipleship, underpins the steps outlined below.

2. Embrace Authentic Repentance: Following the transformative example of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), sincere repentance involves confessing sins, seeking divine forgiveness, and actively striving to align one's life with God's will. This ongoing process of metanoia (a change of heart and mind) is integral to spiritual growth, fostering a deeper relationship with God and enabling transformation. A commitment to regular confession, guided by the principles of restorative justice, allows for spiritual healing and growth.

3. Practice Humble Servanthood: Jesus's act of washing His disciples' feet (John 13:1-17) exemplifies the essence of humble service. Prioritizing the needs of others over one's own, embodying agape (selfless love), is a crucial component of Christian discipleship. This act of service directly reflects the call to imitate Christ and is central to building stronger community relationships and demonstrating faith in tangible ways.

4. Trust in God's Sovereign Plan: Maintaining unwavering faith amidst adversity, as Joseph did (Genesis 50:20), reflects a deep trust in God's providential guidance. This trust transcends human understanding, encompassing a surrender to His sovereign will, acknowledging His ultimate control and plan for one's life. This involves embracing faith over doubt and fostering trust in a higher purpose. Understanding God's sovereignty can be applied through theological models like the concept of prevenient grace, where God's initiative precedes human response, strengthening faith through trials.

5. Practice Detachment from Material Possessions: Jesus's interaction with the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:21) highlights the potential hindrance of material wealth. Developing detachment from worldly possessions involves intentional steps to prioritize spiritual growth over material accumulation, freeing oneself for greater commitment to God and others. This involves the application of models of intentional spiritual disciplines and a critical examination of one's values and priorities.
6. Become a Peacemaker: In accordance with Jesus's teachings on peacemaking (Matthew 5:9), actively pursuing reconciliation and fostering harmony in relationships is essential. By acting as a bridge-builder, extending grace and forgiveness, one embodies Christ's message of peace and reconciliation. This mirrors conflict resolution methodologies and emphasizes the importance of relationship building and relational health in the process of spiritual growth.
7. Extend Unconditional Love: Jesus's command to love enemies and pray for persecutors (Matthew 5:44) challenges us to overcome human limitations. Extending kindness, compassion, and grace, even to those who oppose us, reflects the transformative love of Christ, fostering empathy and compassion and fostering reconciliation through forgiveness and understanding.
8. Cultivate Patience and Trust in God's Timing: Abraham's unwavering faith, despite the prolonged waiting for God's promises (Hebrews 6:15), illustrates the importance of patient trust. Surrendering the desire for immediate gratification, understanding that God's timing is perfect, fosters deeper faith and spiritual maturity. This involves applying the concept of spiritual endurance, understanding that trials serve a purpose in spiritual growth.
9. Practice Generosity and Charitable Giving: The widow's offering (Mark 12:41-44) demonstrates the power of cheerful and generous giving. Giving joyfully from the resources God has provided recognizes that true wealth lies in spiritual riches. This involves applying stewardship principles in managing resources, demonstrating faith through tangible acts of service and support for others.
10. Cultivate a Heart of Gratitude: The parable of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19) underscores the importance of expressing gratitude for God's blessings. Cultivating thankfulness acknowledges God's continuous provision and grace. Practicing gratitude leads to a more positive outlook and strengthens one's spiritual wellbeing. This practice aligns with positive psychology's principles and creates a fertile ground for spiritual growth.
11. Embrace and Extend Forgiveness: Jesus's parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35) emphasizes the crucial role of forgiveness. Extending forgiveness to others, mirroring Christ's forgiveness, releases bitterness and resentment, fostering personal healing and relational restoration. This process reflects restorative justice models and allows for spiritual and emotional healing.
12. Walk by Faith, Not by Sight: Peter's act of faith in walking on water (Matthew 14:22-33) exemplifies trusting God's guidance even amidst uncertainty. Stepping out in faith, trusting in God's presence and provision, demonstrates reliance on faith rather than relying solely on one's own abilities. This is a core principle of faith development and involves learning to trust despite uncertainty.
13. Be a Beacon of Light: Jesus's declaration, "You are the light of the world"

(Matthew 5:14), calls believers to let their lives be testaments to God's love, illuminating the path for others and spreading His message of hope. This involves intentional acts of service and outreach, modeling Christ-like behavior to inspire others.

14. Seek Divine Wisdom: Solomon's request for wisdom (1 Kings 3:9) exemplifies seeking divine guidance. Regular engagement in prayer and Bible study cultivates wisdom, guiding in making godly decisions and navigating life's challenges. This actively seeking God's guidance is a necessary step in becoming more aligned with His will.

15. Surrender to God's Sovereignty: Ultimately, complete surrender to God's sovereign will involves acknowledging His ultimate authority. Trusting His plan and wholeheartedly following Jesus, guided by faith and obedience, is the essence of wholehearted surrender. This is the culmination of the journey, bringing together all aspects of growth and trust into a commitment to God's plan.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Embarking on a journey of surrendering one's life to Christ is a transformative process of continuous spiritual growth. God's boundless love and grace are always available. The fifteen steps outlined above offer a framework for intentional discipleship, emphasizing the importance of personal relationship with God, active participation in the community of faith, and consistent application of biblical principles. This approach, informed by models of spiritual formation and various theological principles, promotes holistic spiritual development. Future research could explore the effectiveness of this framework across diverse cultural and denominational contexts, examining the impact of these practices on various aspects of well-being. By consistently integrating these principles into daily life, individuals can experience a deeper and more fulfilling relationship with God, impacting their personal lives and the world around them. The application of these concepts and practices will contribute to a more profound and transformative Christian experience.

Reader Pool: What practical strategies, beyond those outlined in this article, do you believe are essential for fostering a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ?