

15 Practical Steps to a Deeper Relationship with Christ

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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 Christ

The pursuit of a life fully surrendered to Jesus Christ presents a profound and transformative journey within the context of contemporary Christianity. This endeavor, characterized by agape (selfless love) for God, unwavering faith, compassionate service towards others, and absolute trust in divine providence, necessitates conscious commitment and intentional action. This discourse will delineate fifteen practical steps, informed by biblical narratives and theological principles, to facilitate this transformative spiritual pilgrimage. Key concepts explored include the tenets of theological anthropology (understanding human nature in relation to God), soteriology (the study of salvation), and ecclesiology (the study of the Church), providing a framework for understanding the individual's journey within the larger Christian community.

- 1. Cultivating an Intimate Relationship with Christ Through Spiritual Disciplines:** Establishing a daily communion with God forms the cornerstone of a flourishing faith. This involves consistent engagement in *lectio divina* (prayerful reading of Scripture), *oratio* (vocal and contemplative prayer), and *contemplatio* (meditative reflection), mirroring the profound relationship between Jesus and his disciples. This deep connection, similar to the life-altering encounter of Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2), provides the essential foundation for spiritual growth and transformative living, fostering a personal understanding of theosis (deification or transformation into the likeness of God).
- 2. Embarking on a Lifelong Process of Metanoia (Repentance):** Genuine repentance, as exemplified by Zacchaeus's profound transformation (Luke 19:1-10), involves confession of sins, seeking divine forgiveness, and actively striving towards a life that reflects God's will. This is not merely a singular act but an ongoing process of metanoia (a change of heart and mind), signifying a continuous alignment of one's life with God's moral imperatives and a commitment to ethical behavior informed by Christian values.
- 3. Embracing Humility and Servant Leadership:** Christ's act of washing his disciples' feet (John 13:1-17) epitomizes humble service. Modeling this behavior involves prioritizing the needs of others, reflecting the *kenosis* (self-emptying) of Christ. This act of *kenosis* underpins servant leadership, emphasizing selfless action and a commitment to the well-being of the community, aligning with the principles of agape as the driving force behind actions.
- 4. Exercising Trust in Divine Providence and Sovereignty:** Maintaining unwavering faith, as demonstrated by Joseph (Genesis 50:20) amidst adversity, involves trusting God's orchestration of life events. This requires surrendering to God's sovereign

plan, even in the face of uncertainty, understanding that God's actions are ultimately for the believer's ultimate good and His glory. This trust is a cornerstone of theodicy (the attempt to reconcile God's goodness with the existence of evil).

5. Practicing Detachment from Material Possessions: Jesus's interaction with the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:21) illustrates the potential impediment of materialism. Practicing detachment from worldly possessions necessitates a critical examination of one's attachments, prioritizing spiritual wealth over material gain, thereby freeing oneself for greater devotion to God and service to others. This concept aligns with the principles of asceticism (self-discipline and renunciation of worldly pleasures).

6. Becoming an Agent of Peace and Reconciliation: Following Jesus's teachings on peacemaking (Matthew 5:9) involves actively pursuing reconciliation and harmony in interpersonal relationships. This calls for proactive engagement in conflict resolution, fostering understanding, forgiveness, and building bridges within communities, embodying the principles of Shalom (peace and wholeness).

7. Extending Agape (Unconditional Love) to Enemies: The commandment to love enemies and pray for persecutors (Matthew 5:44) transcends human limitations. Extending agape to those who oppose us demonstrates the transformative power of Christ's love, fostering empathy, compassion, and a willingness to forgive, mirroring God's unconditional love for humanity.

8. Cultivating Patience and Trust in God's Perfect Timing: Abraham's unwavering faith, despite prolonged waiting for God's promises (Hebrews 6:15), underscores the importance of patient trust in God's timing. This involves surrendering the desire for immediate gratification, trusting in God's perfect plan unfolding at His perfect time, reflecting a profound understanding of eschatology (the study of last things and God's ultimate plan).

9. Practicing Generosity and Stewardship: The widow's offering (Mark 12:41-44) highlights the significance of generous giving. Giving cheerfully and generously from God-provided resources reflects faithful stewardship and recognizes that true wealth lies in spiritual riches, aligning with the biblical concept of diakonia (service and ministry).

10. Cultivating an Attitude of Gratitude: The parable of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19) emphasizes the importance of expressing gratitude. Cultivating thankfulness acknowledges God's continuous provision and grace, fostering a positive spiritual disposition and deepening one's relationship with God.

11. Practicing Forgiveness and Reconciliation: The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35) emphasizes the necessity of forgiveness. Extending forgiveness to others, mirroring Christ's forgiveness, releases bitterness and resentment, promoting healing and reconciliation within relationships.

12. Living by Faith, Transcending Sensory Limitations: Peter's act of faith in walking on water (Matthew 14:22-33) illustrates trusting God's guidance amidst uncertainty. Stepping out in faith, even when lacking complete understanding, demonstrates reliance on God's presence and provision, embodying the *pistis* (faith) that transcends doubt.

13. Becoming a Light in the World: Following Jesus's declaration, "You are the light

of the world" (Matthew 5:14), involves allowing one's life to reflect God's love, illuminating the path for others and sharing the message of hope and salvation. This involves active participation in evangelism (sharing the Gospel).

14. Seeking Wisdom Through Prayer and Scriptural Study: Solomon's request for wisdom (1 Kings 3:9) exemplifies seeking divine guidance. Regular engagement with prayer and Scripture provides wisdom for navigating life's challenges and making Godly decisions, strengthening discernment and spiritual understanding.

15. Surrendering to God's Sovereign Will: Ultimately, surrendering complete control to God involves acknowledging His ultimate authority. This necessitates trusting His plan for one's life and wholeheartedly following Jesus's guidance, embracing His will with unwavering faith and obedience.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The journey of surrendering one's life to Christ is a dynamic and ongoing process of spiritual growth and transformation. God's boundless love and grace are perpetually accessible. Embracing His love, believing in His promises, fostering fellowship with fellow believers, and placing unwavering trust in Him are crucial for navigating this transformative journey. Future research could explore the correlation between specific spiritual disciplines and measurable indicators of spiritual growth, assessing the impact of these practices on various aspects of well-being, including psychological, social, and emotional well-being. The practical application of these steps has far-reaching implications for individual spiritual transformation and community building, ultimately enriching the lives of believers and positively impacting society.

Reader Pool: How might the application of these fifteen steps contribute to a more robust and meaningful expression of Christian discipleship within diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts?